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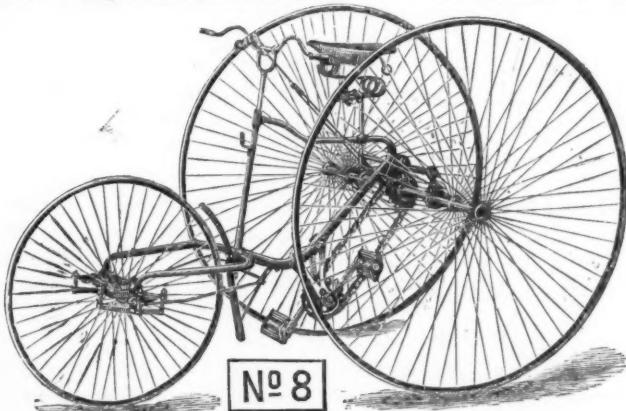
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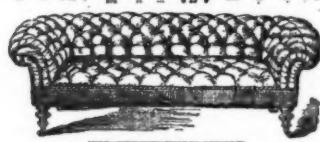
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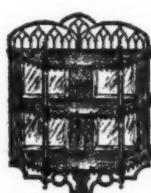
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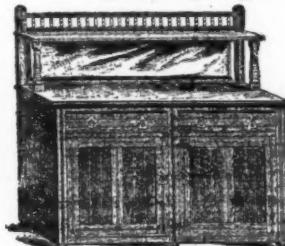


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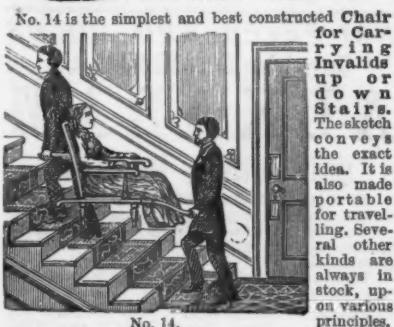


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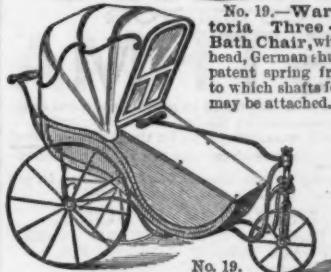


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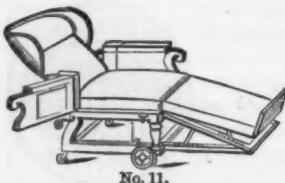
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MAY 1886.

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# LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

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MAY 1886.

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## *Children of Gibeon.*

BY WALTER BESANT.

### BOOK II.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### LOTTY'S ROMANCE.

VALENTINE went away with a guilty feeling, as if she had peeped into the sealed chamber: or eaten the forbidden fruit: or searched after the unlawful mystery: or inquired of the wise woman. Yet truly it was not her own seeking, but the simplest accident which disclosed the thing. The discovery was premature. Had she been able to choose she would rather not have made it, because the only course now left to her was to go on precisely and exactly as if she had not found it out, and so she would be among them all under false pretences.

When she got home between nine and ten o'clock the market in Hoxton Street was in full swing, and the matrons of Ivy Lane were gathered together in the street, talking in knots; there was a group of men about the doors of the 'Adelaide,' and a crowd noisily disputing within the bar.

Was it imagination? or had there already come upon Valentine in one short hour, namely, since the Discovery, a subtle change, so that she no longer regarded the people with quite the same sense of relationship? She was no longer their sister in the narrower sense. We are all of us, to be sure, brothers and sisters — the clergyman tells us so every Sunday, kindly coupling himself

with the assurance, ‘for you and for me, brethren.’ But the recognition of this fact produces fruits of affection and charity in comparative scantiness. One may, besides, acknowledge the relationship, and yet be conscious of a certain natural superiority. Perhaps it was only a passing fancy. Yet there must have been some change. She had come to stay with her own individual sister: she could only now stay with the universal sister, and make believe that she was the private sister. And a great mass of miscellaneous thoughts came crowding into her mind too fast and too numerous for comfortable reception.

As for the people, they already knew Valentine, though only just arrived, as the sister of a work-girl living among them in one of their houses—presumably a shop-girl from her neat dress and respectable appearance, and also apparently ‘quiet’—a quality which in Ivy Lane, as elsewhere, commands the highest respect. The women parted right and left to let her pass, and then closed in again and carried on their Parliament with talk as copious and faces as animated as if they had been a Conference of Advanced Women assembled for the purpose of destroying religion and reversing the political power of the sexes. What do they talk about, these feminine Parliaments of the Crossways? Indeed, no man knoweth; if any were to stay his steps and listen, that rash person would probably be treated as an intruder into the mysteries of Bona Dea. One might, it is true, imitate the reprehensible example of Clodius. Foolish persons, ignorant of these Parliaments and of other things, speak of streets such as Ivy Lane as dull and monotonous. How can a hive of humanity ever be dull? There is no monotony where there are, constantly happening, common to all, and talked about by all, sickness and suffering, birth and death, good hap and evil hap, and the wonderful and dramatic situations continually worked out upon the stage of the Human Comedy by that mysterious unknown Power, known only to man by one quality, and named accordingly by such as speak of Him as ‘The Unexpected.’ Not a day but something happens to redeem such a street from the charge of dulness. Only those places are dull where, though the human ant-hill is divided into streets, the human ants come not forth to exchange words with each other, and one man knoweth not his brother, and each by himself selfishly eateth his own cob nuts and giveth his neighbour none, and each alone bitterly endureth his own pain. It is gentility, especially the first beginning of it, which is dull, when people separate from their fellows and refuse to partake

with them of the sacrament of sympathy, whereof quiet conversation is the outward and visible sign. Kingsland, for instance, is dull, and Shepherd's Bush is dull, and Camden Town is inexpressibly dull. The man who once proposed a Palace of Delight for Whitechapel, forgot that it was ever so much more needed in Camden Town.

Now, as Valentine passed through the open doorway, a man who was standing within stepped aside to make room for her and took off his hat to her. It was not until later that she realised the significance of the gesture. Every one does not recognise the fact that the English working-man never takes off his hat to ladies. A man who does so is not a working-man. He is, or has been, among the ranks of those who do take off their hats: that is, he is, or has been, a gentleman. As Valentine went up the stairs this man went slowly into the ground floor front. She turned to look at him. He looked quite old and was tall, but stooped a good deal. It was too dark to see much of him, but the gaslight in the street outside lit up the narrow passage. She could see that he had long white hair and a great mass of it, and that his chin was white with a week's growth of beard, for it was now Friday, and he only shaved on Sunday morning. His eyes met Valentine's in the doorway, and she remembered afterwards a strange sadness in them, which made her wonder what was the history of the man. In her own room she lit her reading-lamp, and sat down intending to follow out some of the lines of thought opened up to her by her discovery. But she remembered Lotty in the next room, and with self-reproach she went to see her.

The other two girls were out, and Lotty was lying alone. She was in much suffering to-night; her back was bad and her cough was bad; she was moaning as she lay, but in a whisper, so to speak, because when people sleep three in a bed, the habit is acquired of doing one's groans inaudibly for fear of waking the others. The house was nearly opposite the public-house, and the smell of beer and tobacco with the noisy talk of the drinking men came pouring in at the open window.

'What have you eaten to-day?' asked Valentine.

'I am not hungry. Well, then; bread and tea.'

'How long did you work?'

'The others worked all day from half-past six o'clock till nearly nine. But I had to lie down sometimes.'

From half-past six till nine! Fourteen hours and a half—all the livelong day. They had been doing this for eight years, and

they were going on with it all their lives, with no hope of any change or any improvement or any mitigation. It seems a heavy sentence, my sisters, for the Sin of Eve.

Valentine remembered that in her cupboard there lay a great bagful of grapes—big purple grapes from a hothouse, every one as big as a pigeon's egg, and beautiful to look upon for their delicate bloom. Claude left them there for her. Without any more talking, she got a bunch of these and began to put them one by one into Lotty's mouth, just as a nurse gives food to a little child. It was chiefly exhaustion that had brought on the pain. When she had eaten a few of the grapes it was nearly gone.

Then Valentine carried her into her own room, and laid her on her own bed and undressed her.

'You shall stay here to-night,' she said, 'a little out of the noise from the street. And, besides, my bed is softer than yours. I can sleep in the easy-chair. Don't dare to say a word, Lotty. Remember that I am Melenda's sister'—Oh, Valentine!—'and you have never seen me in a rage. I can get into terrible rages if I am contradicted or put out. There, now you are comfortable. Oh, what ragged stockings and shoes! I shall give you a new pair to-morrow. Melenda said you were to have whatever I gave you. And you want everything, you poor thing! And now you must eat some more grapes.'

'If you could only persuade Melenda to take some,' said Lotty. 'But she won't, and she's getting thinner every day.'

'What shall I do? How can I persuade her?'

'Don't do anything, and then, perhaps, she'll come round.'

'Now, Lotty, listen to me. To-morrow is Saturday. The next day is Sunday. I shall do all your work for you to-morrow—do you hear?—and that will give you two days' rest. And then we will see afterwards.'

'You can't do my work.'

'Yes, I can. Why, I can do all kinds of work. Are you tired now?'

'I was tired when you came; but I am not tired now. It was the grapes. You wouldn't rather be out than sitting with me, would you? But, of course, you are a young lady. Lizzie and the City Road isn't fit company for you. Not that it's good for Liz.'

'I would rather be here with you.' Valentine stroked her thin cheek and soft hair. 'It's better for both of us.'

'Oh! you are good,' said Lotty. 'And please don't mind

Melenda. She flies out easy, but she comes round again; and she's kind to me, and never out of temper, though sometimes my back's too bad for me to do any work at all. Then she works for both. There's not a quicker girl with her needle anywhere than Melenda.'

'I will try not to mind. But, Lotty, is there nothing that can be done for you? Have you no friends anywhere?'

'No, I haven't got any friends. Father and mother were country born and bred, and I don't know where they came from. I've got no friends—only Melenda.'

'Let me be your friend too.' Valentine stooped and kissed the girl's forehead. 'Don't be proud, like Melenda. Let me be your friend too, Lotty.'

'Oh! it's wonderful,' said Lotty. 'Why, you are crying too, and you're a young lady. How can I be friends with a young lady?'

'Why not? And I'm Melenda's sister, you know.'

Again—oh, Valentine!

'Melenda says you ought to be like herself, and a work-girl Sam—that's her brother——'

'I know my brother Sam,' said Valentine. A third time? Oh, mendacious one! But it is only the first step which gives trouble.

'Sam says there oughtn't to be gentlemen and ladies—only men and women. But then, ladies don't use language, and they don't drink. It must be a beautiful thing to be a lady, even without the fine things you had on when you came here first.'

'If I am a lady, that is all the more reason for my being your friend. Tell me about yourself. How is it you are so friendless? And were you always so poor?'

'It's through father—because he failed and went bankrupt.'

'Oh! is that all?' Mere bankruptcy, in the light of Ivy Lane poverty, seemed a very small thing.

'Father had a shop once in the Goswell Road, you know. It wasn't a big place, but oh! it was a most beautiful little shop, with a parlour behind and four bedrooms above. In those days we used to go to school—not a Board school, but a Select Academy for young ladies, kept by a real lady who had been a dressmaker in a large way, but met with misfortunes—a beautiful school. On Sunday we all went to chapel, where we had a pew, and put on our Sunday frocks. I don't think there ever was a man fonder of his business and prouder of his shop than father. He'd be con-

tent to spend the whole day in it, setting out the things, sorting his drawers, and talking with his customers. And sometimes he'd go out and stand on the kerb admiring his windows, where the ribbons used to hang up most lovely. But mother she'd make him put on his hat and go out for an hour of fresh air. Mostly he'd go down Aldersgate Street and into Cheapside, just to see how they dressed their windows. After a good day's takings, he'd come in and have supper and talk about bigger premises and of the time when we would be his assistants.'

The romance of a small draper's shop! Yet in it were all the elements which make up romance: the hopes and ambitions of a man for himself and those he loved—the family and the home, the wife and the children—and unexpected fate impending over all with cruel and undeserved disaster. No castle with moated keep could contain better elements of romance.

'And no thought,' said Lotty, 'of what would happen.'

'What did happen?'

'Father went bankrupt. He was broke.'

'How was he—broke?'

'I don't know. The customers fell off. Everybody said it was bad times and so many out of work. It couldn't be the fault of father; nobody could be more civil and obliging. Perhaps they got things cheaper at the stores and the big shops; but father said everyone must make his profit, else how could people live? Whatever it was, the customers fell off, and then father he began to get low-spirited and anxious, and things got worse. As for mother, she'd sit and cry until he came in, and then she'd brisk up and pretend to laugh, and say things would come round, and cheer him up a bit. Oh, poor mother!'

'Poor mother!' Valentine echoed.

'That lasted a long time, and we got poorer every day. There was no more school for us, and we sent away the girl. And one day I remember—it's twelve years ago and more—father came into the back parlour, and sat down and cried as if his heart would break because there was a man in possession, and we were ruined.'

'Oh!'

'That's all. They sold everything we had, and the beautiful shop that we'd all been so proud of was empty and shut up. Then we went into lodgings, and father began to look out for work. But there, he was heart-broken, and he went about as if he was silly.'

'And then?'

‘Why, he came home every day without finding it. Nobody, you see, is so helpless as a draper who’s been bankrupt. For the other tradesmen despise a bankrupt, and it makes them think that he must drink or be extravagant. And, besides, he knows too much. They don’t like to let shop assistants learn all the secrets of the trade. So he could get no work. Then mother, she took ill with the misery, and went off her poor head, and no wonder.’ Lotty stopped to choke. ‘The parish took her, and she died.’

‘And what became of your father?’

‘Oh! don’t blame him, poor dear, because he was quite broken-hearted. And he began to drink, and then he had to be a roader for the parish at eighteenpence a day—him who’d kept his own shop; and one day he took a chill from standing in the mud with his broom and his bad boots, and went to hospital, and died there.’

‘And then you were left alone? You and—had you any brothers or sisters?’

Lotty hesitated.

‘Don’t tell me more than you like, my dear,’ said Valentine.

‘There was—one—other,’ Lotty replied with hesitation. ‘It was Tilly.’

‘What became of Tilly? Did she die, too?’

‘Hush! Lotty whispered. ‘I don’t know where she is now, whether she’s alive or dead. She said she wouldn’t stand it, and she went away.’

‘What did she go away for?’

‘She was a beader: she was that clever with her fingers she could do all kinds of things. Once she had very good work as a butterfly-and-bird hand, and did flat-work and slip-stitching. But there wasn’t much work, and she couldn’t get enough to keep her; and one day she up and said she wouldn’t stand it any longer, and so, with only a kiss and a cry, she went right away—Melenda was out, else she’d never ha’ let her go—and we’ve never seen her since. Sometimes Melenda goes to look for her, but she’s never found her.’

‘Where has she gone, then? Where does Melenda look for her?’

Lotty did not answer this question.

‘Sometimes,’ she said, ‘when I’m alone in the evening I think I hear her step upon the stair, and oh! what I would do if Tilly

would only come back, and be good again—my poor Tilly!—just as she used to be, and bear it all brave, like Melenda.'

'And then I think about Liz,' Lotty went on after a pause. 'Because she's discontented, like Tilly, and the hard work frets her; and she doesn't get enough to eat, and her father's awful poor, and can't help her.'

'Who is her father?'

'It's old Mr. Lane, downstairs. They say he was a gentleman once, and he did something'—'did something,' beautiful euphemism!—'and got into trouble. He writes letters for the German Jews at Whitechapel when they first come, and for the German workmen in the Curtain Road, where they are all furniture men. He knows a lot of languages, but he's so dreadful poor he can't give Liz anything.'

'My dear, is the whole street full of terrible stories like this?'

'Well, we're poor, and I suppose there's stories about all of us—how we came to be poor.'

'There is one thing you've not told me, Lotty: how you came to know Melenda.'

Lotty told that story too. It was a story of two girls' friendship for each other—a friendship passing that of David and Jonathan, commonly supposed to be the leading case in friendships; and how one girl who was strong stood by and worked for the other who was weak; and how for her sake she bore patiently with tyrannies, petty cheatings, bullyings, and defraudings; and how the two presently found another girl as helpless and friendless as themselves, and forced her to remain with them, and kept her in the stony path of labour and of self-respect. Quite a common story—only a wild weed kind of story—a story which may be picked up in every gutter; so that one wonders why Valentine's heart burned within her, and why the tears crowded into her eyes, and ran down her cheeks.

'You must talk no more, Lotty,' she said, when her story was finished. 'They are getting quieter outside and you will be able to sleep very soon. There—the grapes are within your reach. I shall do very well on the chair. Good-night, my dear. Your cough will be better now. Oh! Lotty, Lotty—I never knew there could be such dreadful troubles as these. Poor child!'

'Don't cry. Perhaps Tilly will come back.'

'We must all be sisters together, my dear, and love each

other,' said Valentine, with some incoherence, but she had her meaning. 'It is all that we can do. There is nothing else that will help us all—nothing else.'

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## CHAPTER V.

## A REAL DAY'S WORK.

'If you please, Melenda,' said Valentine, presenting herself in the morning after breakfast, 'I am come to do Lotty's work for her to-day.'

Lotty was with her, looking guilty and rather frightened.

'I didn't ask her, Melenda,' she explained.

'She wants a rest,' said Valentine; 'I mean to do it. May I work here with you, Melenda, or shall I work in my own room? It will be quieter for Lotty if I sit here.'

'It is only another of their whims and fancies,' said Melenda, looking at Valentine as if she was a Specimen. 'Give her the work, Liz, and let Lotty lie down till she's tired of her fancy. That won't be very long, and it'll rest Lotty. Then she'll put it down and go away and forget all about the work and Lotty too. They've got nothing to do and so they're full of fancies. Here, take the work.'

She ungraciously motioned Valentine to a bundle of shirts, as yet without their button-holes, lying on the table.

'Lotty must have rest, Melenda,' Valentine replied, without referring to Melenda's analysis of her own character. 'She wants more food and less work. Let her lie down and rest in my room because it's cooler than this.' She did not add that it was much cleaner, much sweeter, and much prettier. 'She shall have my dinner and I will have hers if you like.'

Lizzie, remembering the ham, chuckled sarcastically. It was her only contribution to the conversation.

'Don't be ungracious, Melenda. I have not offered to give you anything.'

'You shan't, then. There!' Melenda dashed her work aside and sprang to her feet in a sudden passion. 'I'll take nothing from you—nothing. Not even your cheek, nor your pride. And you shall take nothing from me. Oh! you come here and you think you can make me humble because you've got some

money saved and some fine friends, and you've been brought up like a lady and taught to despise us all, and then you think you'll spite me by taking Lotty from me. You shan't have her—no.' She laid her arm round her friend's neck and became immediately soft and tender. 'No, Lotty dear; she wants to part us, but she shan't, shall she? All these years we've been friends and worked together, you and me, and borne such a lot and never grumbled, and she's only just come. I'll do your work for you as well as my own, Lotty, and welcome, if I have to sit up all night for it. But I can't get ham and grapes for you—work all I know—like she can.' The quick tears sprang to her eyes at this consciousness of inferiority.

'She doesn't want to part you and me,' said Lotty, 'I know she doesn't; and you oughtn't to think I'd ever leave you. Don't be so hard on her, Melenda. Isn't she your sister and all, though she is a young lady?'

Melenda dashed the tears from her eyes. Was Lotty herself going to desert her?

Lizzie went on with her work, her head bent over the button-holes as if her friend's health, and any discussion which might arise upon it, was of no concern at all to herself. But she looked up now and then furtively, just to see whether Melenda was going to catch it or to let some one else catch it. Melenda's tears were but the drops of a short shower which comes before a thunderstorm. She stood with kindling eyes and clenched fists. She was jealous; she was so jealous that she would have liked nothing better than to have fallen upon poor Valentine and—luckily, she did not do it. But she looked so fierce that Valentine remembered what had been said to Violet about the tearing out of ladies' hair, and wondered if she was going to lose her own. She was fierce because she was jealous, and she was jealous because Lotty was visibly drawn towards Valentine, and because for the first time her own sacrifice of work and time could do nothing for her friend compared with the soft words, the grapes, and the creature comforts so freely bestowed by the newcomer.

'You shan't take her from me,' she cried again, but with weakened force.

'Don't, Melenda,' said Lotty. 'I'm not leaving you. Oh! why are you so cruel to her?'

Melenda gave in. She said nothing, but threw herself into her chair and gathered up her work. If Lotty wanted to

leave her, she must go. That is what her attitude and action meant.

‘Look at her,’ said Valentine, taking advantage of this momentary weakness which might mean softening; ‘look at her pale face. Let her rest to-day and have good food—to-morrow is Sunday. I will go on with her work here and you may say as many hard things to me as you please.’

‘I tried to do for you, Lotty—I tried my best, I did.’

‘You did, Melenda dear. Oh! yes, I know. But it’s my back.’

‘Take her, then,’ said Melenda with a kind of sullen dignity. ‘Give her what you like. Give her hot roast beef and potatoes, if you like; but you shan’t give none to me.’

Valentine led Lotty away, and set her in her own chair with a pillow in the back, and placed some books on the table within her reach. Then she went back to the work-room.

Now, as regards the girl who was sick, she, left to herself, began first to turn over the leaves of a book which had pictures in it. It was a book of poetry. The only poetry Lotty had ever learned or read—because in the Select Academy poetry was not part of the Curriculum—was the verse contained in the hymn-book used by the chapel where in their palmy days her unfortunate family had worshipped. But it was a great many years since she had gone to any church or chapel, and the hymns were well-nigh forgotten by this time and the hymn-book lost. Consequently when first she looked at the ‘reading’ and saw that it was verse, she thought it must be a hymn-book; but when she came to read the hymns in it and found she could not remember to have read anything like them in her own book, and missed all the old tags and phrases, she began to fear that Valentine was a heretic of some kind. Of the narrow creed which had been preached in that little Primitive Christian Church some few rags and tatters remained; notably, that everybody who did not hold the Catholic Faith as expounded by the Primitive Christians was in a perilous state; and that to be a Papist, or an Anglican, or a Congregationalist, or a Presbyterian, or a Unitarian was to invite certain destruction, while even to continue in the twilight of Baptistedom or Methodism was to incur great risks. It is odd how, when one’s early faith is forgotten, the narrowness of it may remain, like the crust in the bottle after the wine has been poured out. So Lotty closed the book, in confusion of spirit, remembering something vague about falling from sound doctrines, and

bethinking herself of some half-forgotten phrase about the wiles of Satan. These wiles had never been presented to her in a prettier form than in this dainty volume with its pictures and its poetry.

The ignorance, if you come to think of it, of London work-girls and, very likely, of work-girls everywhere, is colossal ; it passeth understanding. They have no books in their rooms, not one single book, not even a Bible or a Prayer-book or a hymn-book—single-room lodgers never have any books ; they read nothing at all, neither books, nor newspapers, nor journals, nor magazines, nor tracts. They have no knowledge of literature in any form. They hear nothing of the outer world : the men, for their part, may meet and discuss things with some show of knowledge, because they sometimes read a newspaper, but the girls do not ; therefore they have not the least understanding of what is going on anywhere, and in all the Art, Science, and Knowledge which we call the inheritance of the Ages, they do not own the smallest share. Since, then, they are as ignorant of everything as the inhabitants of the Solomon Islands, without being anything like so well-fed and so comfortable or so pleasantly clothed, would it not have been far better for all these girls if they had been born in that Archipelago instead of Christian England ? There at least they would have no shirts to stitch if there were none to wear, and they would have plenty to eat, even if it were only dried *bêche-de-mer*, and there would be sunshine and warmth for all.

Two of these girls had been educated at Board schools, where they had reached the third or fourth standard. If you wish, therefore, to know the extent of their possible knowledge, read the third and fourth standard books, and remember that they have already forgotten almost all they ever learned from those encyclopaedic works. And if they are ignorant of book-learning they are equally ignorant of all that is concerned with industry, wages, and trades. They have not the least idea that they could ever better their condition ; they do not understand that they might rebel, or strike, or combine, or do anything for themselves at all. They cannot go into service because they know nothing, not even how to lay a table or how to dust a room ; they cannot emigrate because they would be of no use in any colony ; they can only sew, and, like the steam-engines which are kept going, till they fall to pieces of old age and rust, on coal and water, the sewing girls are just as simply kept at working-power

till something goes wrong with the wheels, on bread and butter and cold tea.

Their ignorance, however, though it was colossal, did not make them unhappy, nor did it humiliate them. The great Giant Ignorance has one good point: he is, in his way, good-natured; he never suffers his victims to be unhappy or humiliated by reason of their subjection. Melenda, indeed, thought herself possessed of extraordinary knowledge, as well as of immense sagacity.

Presently Lotty began to look about the room and to realise slowly the way in which young ladies live—always in easy-chairs, soft and low, with flowers on the table and grapes in the cupboard, curtains to the window, books on a shelf, pictures on the wall, fans, scent on the mantelshelf, and laced handkerchiefs. How would it be to live like this always, and never do any work; never to be hungry, and never to have a pain in the back? While she was thinking of this, and wondering vaguely and asking herself if Melenda was right in saying that Valentine would soon go away and forget all about them, her eyes closed and she dropped off to sleep, lulled by the unusual sense of rest, freedom from pain, and physical ease. She had, besides, a great quantity of arrears to make up in the matter of sleep, and the morning was very hot, and there was a most delicious sense of coolness in the room and the unaccustomed fragrance of flowers, all of which reasons may serve for her excuse.

The making of button-holes is one of those occupations in which it is impossible to take an artistic interest. She who sews them is not sustained by a sense of beauty, because when you have finished and turned out your button-hole, you cannot possibly call it beautiful: it is not a thing, for instance, which you can hold up and watch while the sunlight plays among the stitches and the light and shade set off their graceful curves; besides, you have got to go straight on to make another as soon as one is finished. Nothing sustains the workwoman but the reflection that, though it takes a good many stitches to make a button-hole, so many dozen button-holes make so many pence.

The making of button-holes, however, is said not to be difficult. Any girl who has learned to sew can learn to make them in a few minutes. Valentine received a few simple instructions from Lizzie, and then, taking Lotty's place on the bed, she began to work. The button-holes were for shirts, but these were of a coarse and common kind, made of rough material, for exportation very

likely—shirts warranted to be as uncomfortable and as rasping as the monastic hair shirt. In fact, I think it is very likely they were invented before the Reformation for the use of monks and modern eremites, and then only for the strictest and most profoundly miserable Order of Self-tormentors. They are now, I believe, used for the converts (previously shirtless) made by the missionaries. And the story of 'My First Shirt' has yet to be written. So enterprising has always been the Spirit of British Commerce!

Valentine was clever with her needle, and could embroider as beautifully as Penelope. Unfortunately she was as slow and as deliberate as that lady-in-waiting, and loved to linger over her work, and look at it, and think about it, and at times unstitch some of it. Therefore she soon perceived that Melenda turned out button-holes about five times, and Lizzie about three times, as fast as herself. Then she made haste to imitate them, and addressed her mind to the question of rapidity rather than of beauty in her work.

No one spoke: there was no other sound in the room than the click of thimbles and the rustling of the stuff. Valentine's thoughts wandered from her work, which was monotonous. This, she reflected, was the room in which three girls slept, worked, and lived. They all three lay on one bed, that on which she was sitting. It was a broad wooden bed, with a hard mattress a good deal depressed in the middle, and neither feather bed nor springs. The hot July sun was pouring in at the window, where the yellow blind, which might once have been white and could no longer draw up, was pinned back so as to leave a triangle of sunshine. Valentine sat in the shade, and thought she had never in her life seen so many motes dancing in the sun. The room was neglected, and wanted cleaning horribly; the grate was rusty; there was not a book in it, or a magazine, or a paper—nothing to read; there were no pictures on the wall; there were no ornaments of any kind; the whitewash of the ceiling had fallen down in one corner exposing the laths; there was no carpet; the two or three cooking utensils which lay within the fender seemed to have been long unused. A place, it seemed, built with intention for the abode of grinding, wretched, hopeless poverty; a place exactly fitted for the kind of work, where there was no prospect of improvement, however zealously one worked, or of any higher pay or more regular employment.

Valentine forgot that the girls were young, and that even to work-girls there is hope, while they are young, that these troubles

will pass away somehow, and give place to some unknown kind of joy.

‘Well,’ asked Lizzie pertly, ‘isn’t it good enough for you?’

It was at nine o’clock that Valentine began to work. At ten, or thereabouts, she became aware that she must stop, get up, and straighten herself. She did so. Melenda worked on like a machine, and took no notice at all. The other girl looked and smiled grimly. ‘I thought you’d give in soon,’ she said. ‘Lotty has to lie down every half-hour.’

‘I haven’t given in,’ Valentine replied indignantly.

Then she sat down and went on again.

In another hour her head began to reel, and she felt giddy. If two hours of button-holes produced such an effect, what would the whole day do for her? She laid aside her work, and looked up ashamed. By this time the room was very hot, although the door and window were both open, and from the street below, baked by the midday sun, there was wafted upwards a mingled perfume or incense, made up of things lying in the street; of the industries in the houses—such as the pressing of cloth, which is a hot and steamy smell; or the burning of leather straps, which is insidious, and makes one feel sick; with the smell from a fried-fish shop not far off—this is a smell which makes one sad; and the stale reek of yesterday’s tobacco and beer—this is a smell which makes one sorry—from the public-house opposite.

‘Do you do this every day?’ she asked foolishly, because she knew very well that they did.

‘Every day,’ said Lizzie—Melenda still taking no notice—‘and all day long. Don’t you like it?’

‘Don’t you ever stop to read, or talk, or sing, or something?’

‘Sing! Oh, Lord!’ Lizzie replied with infinite contempt. ‘Stop to sing?’

‘All day long,’ Valentine repeated, ‘and never any holiday?’

‘Only when there’s no work. Fine ladies never think how they’d like it themselves’—Lizzie, too, was able to borrow something from the indignant Sam. ‘Ain’t it nice to make cheap things?’

Valentine took up her work again and went on, wondering how long life could be endured if she were doomed to spend it among button-holes. Then she tried to imagine herself the life-long companion of Melenda, and altogether such an one as Lizzie, and that she had never done anything else and never known any other kind of existence; and she wondered what she would be

thinking about. But her imagination failed her, and refused to pretend any such thing, partly because the things worn by poor Lizzie were not nice to look at.

‘Do you never do anything at all?’ she asked presently, ‘except work all day and walk the streets in the evening?’

‘Some girls go to the Britannier when they’ve got the money, or anybody treats them. I’ve never got the money, and I’m not going to be treated by anybody, no more than Melenda. There used to be the Grecian as well, but they’ve turned that into the Salvation Army; and there’s the Theatre of Varieties in Pitfield Street, there’s Collins’s at Islington, and there’s the Foresters in the Cambridge Road. Some girls go to public-houses and drink with the men. We won’t, Melenda and me. There’s talk of a girls’ club, but—well, there’s nothing else to do but to walk the streets at night, and you’d walk them, too, if you’d been sitting at work all day.’

‘And Sundays?’

‘We lie abed on Sunday mornings, and go out in the afternoons.’

‘And on wet and cold evenings?’

‘Then we sit at home, and go to bed early to save candle and fire.’

‘Do you never go to church?’

‘Not likely!—Liz lifted her ragged skirt. ‘In this?’

‘Don’t waste your time chattering, Lizzie,’ said Melenda. Then there was silence.

Soon after noon Valentine was seized with an overwhelming desire to get up and jump, or run, or leap over something.

‘I must jump!’ she cried, and did it.

‘That’s fidgets,’ said Lizzie. ‘I used to have them, but I’m used to it now.’

The attack presently yielded to violent measures, for fidgets are like cramp, and must be dealt with resolutely. In reading of convicts chained to each other, and obliged to sleep side by side, I have often thought how dreadful and intolerable a thing it would be if one of them were to get an attack of fidgets and not be able to spring out of bed. Then Valentine was going to sit down again, when Melenda interposed. Lotty, she said, always rested in the middle of the day. She had better do the same and get her dinner.

‘Am I not to have Lotty’s?’

‘Don’t be silly,’ said Melenda. ‘As if you could make a

dinner off bread and tea! What time did you generally have your dinner ?'

'At half-past seven.'

'That's supper. What did you have before that ?'

'There was tea at five.'

'And before that ?'

'Luncheon at half-past one.' Valentine began to feel guilty of most reckless gluttony.

'Oh ! And what did you have at all of them ?'

Valentine confessed with shame to meat at luncheon and at dinner, and possibly at breakfast.

'There,' said Melenda, 'it's ridiculous. You can't have dinner like Lizzie and me. Go away and get something to eat, and give it to Lotty if you like. We don't eat much here, but we're independent.'

Valentine obeyed, and the other two girls went on working in silence.

Presently there was heard proceeding from Valentine's room a most curious and remarkable sound. Nothing less than the laughter of two girls, a thing which had never happened in the house in the memory of its residents. Lizzie looked up, curious and envious ; Melenda, suspicious and jealous.

'They're laughing,' said Lizzie. 'What are they laughing for ?'

'She's made Lotty laugh,' said Melenda, who had never even tried to work such a miracle. 'What's she said to her ? Lotty wouldn't never laugh at us.'

The laughing continued, and Lizzie's curiosity increased, and Melenda's face grew cloudier and darker.

The old lady in the room below, sitting by herself with her funeral trimmings in her hands, thought somebody must have gone mad. Who but mad people and children ever laughed in Ivy Lane ? But the laughing still went on, and her thoughts flew back to a time long, long ago when the poor old thing herself laughed all day long—living in the Fool's Paradise which sees nothing around or before but a luminous and sunlit haze. Nobody would ever laugh, I suppose, if that haze were to be suddenly removed. Happy Paradise ! Happy fools who live in it ! And all to end in the workhouse during the winter, and such sewing as could be got in the summer from Mr. Croquemort of Bethnal Green. Presently she could bear it no longer, this poor old woman, but got up and put down her work, and stealthily crept out of her room and crawled

half-way up the narrow stairs, her neck craned, her eyes glaring, her ear turned, to see what they were laughing at, and to hear what they were saying. She neither heard nor saw, but a strange emotion fell upon her withered old soul. The laughter of girls—light-hearted laughter!—she remembered how, long, long ago—fifty years ago—when she was nineteen or twenty, two young girls sat in a carriage on a racecourse, and laughed with handsome and gallant young gentlemen, while the pink champagne foamed and sparkled in the long glasses, and the gipsy woman stood at the carriage-wheel, and the girls crossed her palms with gold. Then that old woman, with something like a sob, felt in her pocket and found twopence, and she went across the street to the 'Adelaide' and had a glass of gin. After this she returned to her own room and fell asleep, and, perhaps, dreamed of that long past happy time of unthinking folly.

As for the laughing, it was over nothing at all but the cooking of the dinner at which Valentine showed herself so awkward and so ignorant. Why, she knew nothing, not even the price of potatoes, or how to buy them, and she had got the very dearest kind of beef, and such an immense quantity, and Lotty had to tell her everything, even to the rolling-up of her sleeves; but she would do it all herself, and so they both laughed. And the business was no doubt as comic as the making of a pudding on the stage, which is, we know, always most effective business.

And then, with the laughter, the other girls heard a hissing and sputtering, which lasted ten minutes or thereabouts, and was accompanied by an extraordinary fragrance, of the kind which used in the old days to delight those dear, simple Immortal Gods, so easily pleased—the incense, or perfume, namely, of meat, roasted, seethed, or fried.

Then Lizzie sat bolt upright, and said solemnly, with pale cheek, and that far-off look in her eyes which a painter might take for a yearning after Things Invisible and Unattainable—

‘Melenda, they’ve got—it’s—it is—STEAK! ’

‘What does it matter,’ said Melenda, ‘what they’ve got? ’

Lizzie was silent for another half minute. But the fragrance mounted to her brain and made her giddy, and filled her with a craving for food.

‘Oh, Melenda, I’m so hungry.’

‘That comes of taking things. If you hadn’t eaten that ham two days ago, you wouldn’t have been hungry now.’

There was once a foolish Greek person, whose history used to

be read in the 'Analecta Minora,' when that work was put in the hands of schoolboys. He had a theory that horses ate too much, and he gradually reduced the rations of corn for his own horse, with a view to making that animal live upon nothing, and become perfectly independent of food. Just as he was upon the point of success the creature died. Melenda held much the same views.

'For shame!' she added; 'where's your independence, Liz?' Just what the Greek person might have said to the horse.

'Bother Independence,' replied Lizzie, replying in the very words of the horse, 'I am hungry.'

'If you eat beefsteak to-day,' said Melenda, 'there'll be nothing but bread and cold tea to-morrow and—'

But Lizzie was gone. The perfume of the beef drew her as with ropes, and she could not choose but go.

In Valentine's room there was a white cloth spread and the dinner just ready, and Lotty, with flushed cheeks, helping to serve it, and both of them laughing.

'Come in, Lizzie,' cried Valentine gaily; 'there is plenty for all of us. Will you ask Melenda?'

'She won't come. Don't you go—she might fly in your face.'

Valentine hesitated. Then she sat down. During dinner they talked and laughed again—actually laughed and made little jokes together. When had Lotty laughed last?

Dinner done and things washed and cleared away, they went back into the other room. Melenda was still at work, dogged and stern, with hard set mouth and resolute eyes, sick with the yearning that the smell of the roasted meat had caused, but stubborn and obstinate.

'Melenda,' said Valentine, 'can you live on bread and tea?'

'What's that to you? I've got to.'

'Oh,' she cried, 'it is shameful.'

'Then mend it,' said Melenda fiercely; 'mend it if you can. If you can't, let us alone to bear it as well as we can. We can bear it, can't we, Liz?'

Lizzie turned her great eyes to Valentine.

'Can you mend it?' she asked. 'It is very hard to bear. Can you mend it?'

'Oh! I can do nothing to mend it. And Melenda will not let me do anything to help it.'

'I thought you were going to do Lotty's work.'

‘She’s done more already than Lotty used to do in a whole day,’ said Liz. ‘Let her rest a little, Melenda.’

‘No, no,’ said Valentine, ‘I shall do my day’s work.’

The slow minutes passed slowly. Through the open window there came the murmur and the hum of Hoxton Street and St. John’s Road. It was rather a sleepy murmur, because Hoxton is not a noisy place, and there are few omnibuses and fewer cabs, and very few carts and waggons. Presently Valentine felt as if they were all three set down in some far-off place of torture, in an undescribed circle of the Inferno, condemned to work at button-holes without ceasing—button-holes for shirts which would fit nobody—like the unhappy damsels who have to fill sieves with water, and to spend their whole time—they’ve got all the time there is—in pouring it in and seeing it run out again—a most tedious employment and, one cannot help thinking, with submission and respect to the Court, a foolish punishment, and one can only hope that they get their Sundays at least free, in which case they are no worse off than Melenda and her friends.

Presently Valentine began aloud to shape out a little apologue which occurred to her.

‘Once upon a time,’ she said, ‘there were three poor girls, and there was a wicked Witch. The Witch was always making spells for the raising of storms and bringing diseases upon good people and thwarting the work of honest people. For use in her charms she wanted a continual supply of Button-holes; but why Button-holes are good for magic I cannot tell you, only I believe that if you work at them long enough you can raise the—the Devil. Anyhow, I know that they are most invaluable for conjuring, incantations, making people mad and miserable, and all kinds of sorcery. The difficulty with this Witch was to find people who would sew the Button-holes for her, because it is horrible work and tedious work, that no one would do if there was anything else to be done, and because it is work which by the laws of the country—but I think this law is an unjust one—is forbidden to be paid for at the rate of more than a farthing apiece, so that the fastest worker cannot earn more than a shilling a day at it. For a long time the Witch looked about in vain. But at last she found three girls who were all so desperately poor that they were ready to take any kind of work that was offered them. It was a very heartless and wicked country, in which the rich ladies took no thought for poor girls, and did not interfere as they ought to have done, or insist upon finding them good work and fair wages,

as of course they do in our own country—in England. So she offered them the work. She did not persuade them with honeyed words. She did not say, “My dears, if you will come and make Button-holes for me, you shall have roast beef and pudding every day, with money to go to all kinds of beautiful places.” Not at all. She came scowling and cursing, and she threw the work in the middle of them, and she said: “You girls; take the work or leave it. If you leave it, you will starve; if you take it, you shall taste meat once a week—on Sundays, perhaps—and live for six days on bread and butter and tea. You shall work all day long except Sundays; you shall not have any holidays; you shall waste and throw away in this dreadful work all your youth and beauty; you shall not know any pleasure or rest or fulness; you shall go hungry in body and soul. Don’t think the rich ladies will interfere or help you. They care nothing for you——”

‘They don’t,’ said Melenda, now become interested in the story.

“They have been told about you till they are sick of hearing the story; but they will do nothing for you. So take it or leave it.” That is what the dreadful old Witch said.

‘Of course they took the work,’ said Melenda.

‘Of course they did; and of course they grew every day hungrier and more hopeless. And one of them was weak, and she gets weaker. Then the other two worked harder to make up. But they couldn’t quite make up; and one grew more miserable, but she worked on still’—Lizzie bent her head—‘and one grew harder and more angry, and she worked the hardest of all.’

‘Very fine talk,’ said Melenda, with an intelligent sniff. ‘They’ve taught you how to talk. You talk as well as Sam almost.’

‘But I haven’t done yet. Suppose a messenger was to come from some rich lady to these girls—a girl like themselves—and suppose she was to offer them lighter work and better pay. Suppose she was to offer them, out of her own abundance, help of any kind—’

‘The girls wouldn’t be fools enough to take it,’ said Melenda. ‘They want justice. That’s what Sam says. “Take your charity away,” he says, “and give us justice.”’

‘This lady would say through her messenger, “I cannot get justice. I am quite powerless to get justice for girls in the clutches of black wizards and witches. But I can help you three.” Melenda, suppose her messenger brought this message, would you send her away?’

‘You can talk,’ said Melenda. ‘But you won’t make me take your charity.’

At four o’clock Lotty made some tea and brought it to them, Melenda not regarding. Then they went on working again in silence. By this time Valentine’s fingers ached so that the needle travelled slowly, and her arms ached so that she could hardly hold the stuff in her lap, and her back, though she was as strong as most girls, ached with the stooping, and her head ached with the heat and closeness of the room, and her fingers were sore with handling the coarse material of which the shirts are made, and her eyes were red and inflamed.

But she would not give in.

Melenda was working as fiercely and as fast as if it was seven in the morning, and she had only just begun, and then after an excellent and invigorating breakfast. Lizzie with the quiet dull patience she habitually gave to the work, but with much greater discontent, for she had now tasted some of the joys of a lady’s life. It meant, she perceived, a pretty room to live in, with soft dresses and gloves, and your hair done beautifully, and beefsteak and cocoa for dinner. ‘You ought,’ said the gentleman she knew, ‘to live like a lady, and have nothing to do all day but to let me paint your eyes.’ And when Valentine went away, which would be very soon, there would be no more beefsteak. My brothers, think of it: the mind of man cannot conceive a greater temptation than this, when a girl half-starved and robbed of joy and doomed to the misery of work the most hopeless and the most miserable, perceives that the Unattainable—the life of physical comfort and material well-being, the life she has always longed for, the life that it is natural to desire—is actually within her reach and to be had—just by signing her name to a little piece of parchment, and giving that agreement—of course after it has been duly stamped and entered at Somerset House—to the Devil.

About half-past eight Lotty came in, refreshed after her long day’s rest and sleep. ‘Oh!’ she said, tearing the work from Valentine’s hands; ‘oh! Melenda, how could you let her go on?’

For Valentine’s cheek was pale and her eyes were swimming, and now she looked dazed, and trembled as she sat.

‘I will not give in,’ she cried; but she did, because she broke into sobbing and crying, ‘Oh, Lotty—is it every day—all day—all day long, like this?’

‘She would do it,’ said Melenda. ‘Get a little water, Liz! Quick! Don’t stand gaping! It’s the heat of the day. Wet

her temples. That's right. Don't cry, Polly. I knew you couldn't do it. Get something out of her cupboard for her, Lotty. Some of them grapes. What can you expect of a girl like this trying to do a day's work like Liz and me ?'

Melenda's good temper came back to her when once she had proved her superiority. Why, when you came to try a real day's work, where was Polly, after all ? Nowhere.

' You look after her, Lotty.' She went on with her work, for there was still a quarter of an hour or so of daylight ; but Lizzie threw down hers. As for Valentine, it was only for a few moments that the hysteria held her, and she sat up again recovered and a little ashamed of herself for giving in at the end. But—what a day !

It was Saturday evening, and the lane was noisier than usual. Presently Melenda herself thought she might stop, and they began to put things away for Sunday. It may be proved from religious statistics that button-hole makers, though they never go to church, are more open to conviction on Sabbath doctrines than any other class of persons. They would even like a Sabbath week or a Sabbath year—that is, a whole week or even a whole year of Sabbaths.

' I must sing,' said Valentine. ' I am so tired, and I ache so much that I must sing. Do you never sing, you people ? How can you live without it ? I will sing to you.'

There must be some recreation after work. Melenda and Lizzie got theirs by walking the streets ; Lotty hers by resting. Valentine tried to find hers by singing.

Below in the street, the people were all outside their houses, gathered in groups talking and enjoying the cool air of twilight. To these people there happened the most wonderful thing in all their experience. Suddenly there struck upon all ears the voice of one who sang—the voice was like unto the sound of a silver clarion. The song they heard went straight to all hearts by reason of the air, for they were careless of the words ; it made their pulses quicken and brightened their eyes, and the Parliament of women was hushed, and the feet of all were drawn towards the house, and even the children ceased their shouting, and sat still to hear. For such singing had they never heard and never dreamed of. What Valentine sang, in fact, was a ditty called the ' Kerry Dance.'

While she sang there came down the street, not arm in arm, because they were deadly enemies, yet walking together because they loved each other, a certain Assistant Priest—formerly he would

have been called the Curate—and a certain young General Practitioner, Medicine-man, Doctor, a person skilled in Physic, Anatomy, Botany, Biology, and all kinds of learned things. Both were young as yet, and poor. I know not which of the two was the more pragmatic, pedantic, and conceited; whether the Assistant Priest, who professed to know the secret ways of the Almighty, and pretended to be entrusted with the most tremendous powers, and measured Law, Order, and Humanity by the little tape of his little sect—he was a Ritualist person and impudently called his Sect ‘the Church:’ or he who knew all about Bacteria and Mikrokokkos and Evolution and Protoplasm, and didn’t want any Church at all, and saw no soft place anywhere in his stupendous intellect where he could possibly want any religion.

‘O Lord!’ cried the Doctor, who only believed in himself, and therefore generally called upon the Lord.

‘Dear me!’ said the Assistant Priest, who didn’t believe in himself at all, and therefore swore by his own name.

‘This is very wonderful,’ said the Doctor, listening to the Voice.

‘Oh! To think of it  
Oh! To dream of it,’

sang Valentine.

‘This,’ said the Assistant Priest, ‘is the most wonderful thing I have ever heard. What a Voice!’

He left the Doctor and followed the Voice up the stairs, and found himself unexpectedly in a room filled with four girls, at sight of whom he turned and fled, conscious of intrusion.

But the people in the street were clapping their hands.

Said Lotty, ‘Oh! it’s lovely. But they want another.’

Valentine laughed and sang another. The singing quite restored her. This time she sang ‘Phillis is my only joy.’

The people held their breath while they listened. When it was over Valentine shut down the window, to show that the performance was finished.

‘It’s all very well,’ said Melenda, once more conscious of inferiority; ‘anyone could do it if she had been taught.’

‘Anyone,’ said Valentine.

‘But oh!’ said Lotty; ‘all the same it’s wonderful.’

‘There were four girls in the room,’ said the Assistant Priest, ‘and one was lying on the bed. And the one who was singing looked somehow—but it was rather dark—like a lady. I felt I had no business there, so I came away.’

‘Of course she was a lady,’ said the Doctor. ‘Nobody but a lady could sing like that. Well; I hope she’ll come again. What a mistake you fellows made when you turned the women out of your choirs! By Jove! That girl’s singing would actually make the men go to church.’

What the Assistant Priest replied I shall not report. As he lost his temper every day with the Doctor—they met every day—it would not be fair to set down in cold blood the things he habitually said on these occasions. One may, however, record briefly that he now began with, ‘*I do think*’—which is the London clerical equivalent for a well-known Yorkshire idiom; sometimes he added, ‘*I must say*.’ But that was only when the controversy raged long and bitterly, and when this, or its equivalent, in nautical language, or the bargee dialect, or the London patois, was absolutely necessary.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### BEHIND SAINT LUKE’S.

‘Oh, Claude!’ Valentine opened her door and came out to meet him when he knocked on the Sunday morning. ‘I never thought I should be so happy to see anybody! And you are ten minutes late, sir. To be sure, you have not been all alone in Ivy Lane for three days.’

‘The place is truly awful, Valentine. It looks even worse to-day than when we came here with Violet.’

Certainly Ivy Lane has a way of looking more mournfully shabby and dirty on Sunday mornings in summer than on any other morning in the week; perhaps this is because there are more potsherds, mouldy crusts, bruised and decaying fruit, bits of paper, cabbage stalks, potato peelings, broken pipes, plugs of tobacco, and other drift and wreckage of life lying about on that than on any other day. It was already past eleven, but very few people were stirring, and no one had yet taken a broom in hand or thrown a bucket of water over the flags. Lizzie and Melenda were not yet dressed; Lotty was lying on Valentine’s bed in restful ease, not asleep, because it is foolish to sleep in moments free from pain. She had a book in her hands, but her thoughts were wandering away to the old times of the happy days in the little shop before the custom fell off; and she was a child again

with poor impatient Tilly, and her father was proud of the shop, and her mother was happy in her husband and her children. For what sins, far back in the third or fourth generation of unknown and obscure ancestors, had Fate been so hard upon this poor draper of Goswell Road and his family?

‘ You are still alive, Valentine, and no one has——’

‘ No one has offered me the least incivility, Claude, except of course Melenda, who is still unforgiving.’

She looked as bright and as fresh as a young girl of twenty can be expected to look. Her long day’s work had left no trace behind except a little paleness of cheek, and perhaps a little shading below the eyes; standing among those dingy houses in her youth and grace and beauty she looked as Aphrodite herself might have shown had she imitated the Father of the Gods when he went visiting the slums and called upon Baucis and Philemon in their squalid hut. She had been waiting for Claude a whole half-hour, quite ready for him, and ‘ with her Things on’ —pretty, poetical, feminine locution! To mere man, a woman’s dress is the setting and frame of beauty, the mysterious accompaniment of loveliness, a thing to be regarded with wonder and respect: but to superior woman it is but a collection of ‘ Things.’ Such is the philosophic superiority of the sex, and so readily do they despise mere external trappings and outward show.

‘ It is a dreadful place,’ Claude repeated. ‘ I am amazed that you dared to come here. Can you be happy in it?’

A most weak and feeble question. What is the use of asking a girl who is young, strong, beautiful, and relieved from the necessity of work, if she can make herself happy anywhere, and especially where she is entirely free? No one knows, until he has witnessed it, the happiness which the young lady, even of the best regulated mind, feels when her movements are free and uncontrolled; and to think that, with their liberty yet to gain, women will fight for such vain shadows as female suffrage and a seat on a School Board! Besides which, Valentine was going to spend a whole morning in the company of a young man charming in many respects, but especially in this, that he believed himself to be her brother.

Happiness, again, is so uncertain a quality. Nobody, except a newly engaged couple, is often consciously happy. We do not recognise happiness until it has vanished; and then we lament, yet with pride, as those who have entertained a god unawares. A truly remarkable thing that all the world should ardently

desire a possession which nobody understands until it has vanished. A certain ancient philosopher, after he had made an impromptu conundrum, or a double acrostic, upon this paradox, went away and elaborated a Treatise, now happily lost, on the 'Folly of Praying for Happiness.' I suppose that, even on this Sunday morning, Valentine would hardly have confessed to perfect happiness.

'I am going,' she said, 'to take you for a walk. There are no parks in Hoxton, and there are no gardens or anything. I suppose there is no place in all London so far from any open space as Ivy Lane. So we can only walk about the streets. But when we are tired, I know of a beautiful churchyard—I found it the other day—where we can sit down and rest. A good many of the people are in bed still, because it is Sunday morning. Lying in bed saves breakfast; and, besides, it rests them. They get up, I believe, somewhere about dinner time. Melenda and Lizzie are in bed now, for instance. However, we shall find some of the people in the streets.'

For her own part Valentine had very little desire to study the People—with a capital initial. She came to Hoxton solely in order to get acquainted with the members of her own particular family, the Monuments: and especially with Melenda Monument. But she was naturally curious about the new strange life she found there. Curiosity has led to a good many remarkable things: to the conversation with the Serpent and the tasting of the Apple; to the breaking of all laws—human and divine, moral and meddlesome, just and unjust; to the acquisition of all the knowledge that has been acquired, and to the growth and development of sympathy. She was by no means a Philanthropist. Her interests, like those of all healthy-minded young people, were as yet chiefly confined to those whom she knew and loved. Her affections as yet limited her sympathies; she had no desire to deduce and to lay down general laws concerning the manners and customs or the instincts of what we feelingly call the 'Lower Classes'—philanthropy does sometime cover such a beautiful contempt for its objects. She just began by being interested in a group of three working girls, from whom she was rapidly learning the one lesson most worth learning, namely, that the People are, in all essentials, exactly the same as the Other People. There are not, in fact, in this any more than in any other country, two races, but one; and the best way of acquiring an exhaustive and scientific knowledge of that one race is to sit before a looking-

glass for a long time and look at it. This is really a most valuable maxim, and the sooner it is generally accepted and acted upon the better for everybody, particularly for those who are ridden by Fads, Fancies, and Old Men of the Sea. Women, for some unknown reason, understand this law better than men, and it is the cause not only why they make better nurses, but also why they are harder in their dealings with the poor and needy. Those who love sweet sentimentality and the pleasures of imagination should not try to understand too many laws of humanity.

Valentine was brimful of things to talk about ; but when a lady lives altogether in one room, she cannot very well use it as a salon. This difficulty is generally, by the ladies of Ivy Lane, on the evenings when they are At Home, overcome by receiving their friends upon the kerbstone or by sitting on the doorsteps. Valentine, perhaps in ignorance of this custom, preferred to wander about the streets, and led Claude forth into labyrinthine Hoxton. The city has been, it is true, laid out something like an American town, with parallel streets and cross streets at right angles ; but it has happily preserved some of the old winding-ways which were formerly lanes between hedgerows, across fields, and among orchards of plum, cherry, apple, and pear. The lanes remain—some think that Dædalus once lived in Hoxton, about the time when Pythagoras was teaching at Cambridge—but the hedgerows are gone, and houses and shops have taken their place. Valentine piloted Claude among the winding courts, but first she led him into Hoxton Street, where on a Sunday morning there is always a great market held and all the shops are open. The roadway is covered with the carts of costers, and the pavement is crowded with those who stroll idly along, content to be doing nothing except to lean against something solid, pipe in mouth and hands in pocket. Valentine led the way with the air of an old acquaintance—a two days' old acquaintance—and as one, therefore, competent to become a cicerone. She showed Claude the streets, branching right and left, those where every room in every house is a workshop as well as a living-room and a sleeping-room, and those where every house contains a workshop. There are no other kinds of houses in Hoxton City. In one place she showed him a mysterious court, paved and broad and clean, consisting of little two-storied houses inhabited by cobblers, repairers of umbrellas, sign-writers, feather-finishers, and the like, which is protected and beautified at either end by most magnificent iron gates, solid

and splendid, richly worked, and fit for a duke's palace. How did these gates come to Hoxton ?

Presently, in their walk, they came to a church, and they looked into it. The morning service was halfway through. Wonderful spectacle ! There was not a single man in the church, except the two clergymen, the choir, and the churchwardens : yet everything set out in readiness for a full and enthusiastic congregation of the Faithful, with a lovely row of lighted candles in staring brass candlesticks where no lights were wanted, mocking the sunshine which poured through the windows, quite an extensive choir in surplices, and two officiating clergymen, one of whom kindly mumbled his words and pretended that he was saying Mass (so that if by chance a stray Roman Catholic should drop in he might not feel out of place and awkward), and in one snug corner a place provided with a curtain and a chair—the whole forming the simple Properties necessary for a nice little Confessional, handy for the Destruction of Manhood, the Suppression of the Intellect, and the Overthrow of Reason. Sad indeed that Englishmen should be found to scoff and to stand upright and to think for themselves, and to speak words of derision about this innocent little piece of furniture ! Outside the church benighted scoffers stood about in groups among the carts and the carrots, and even joked and actually laughed among each other ; but not at the Church, nor at the Mock-Massery, nor at the Mystery-Mumbling, nor at the Confessional-box, because they were perfectly, wholly, and completely ignorant and careless and indifferent about anything which might be going on within that building.

‘This,’ said Claude when they came out, ‘reminds me of a procession on the stage where they have forgotten the spectators.’

‘It is like a concert,’ said Valentine, ‘where there is no audience. Isn’t it dreadful, Claude, for nobody to go to church ?’

‘It doesn’t seem quite as if the Church had got a strong grip of the people about these parts, does it ?’

Then they left that street, and presently stood upon a bridge and gazed upon the romantic waters of the canal which parts Hoxton from Kingsland ; and then along St. John’s Road, which is a boulevard less popular than Hoxton Street, yet loved by the quiet and the meditative. At the end of the street stands a massive church—one of those churches built in the middle of the last century, with a vast portico of granite pillars and a white spire which is big and high and yet not beautiful. They looked

into that church too. There were no confessional cribs and no candles ; no one was mumbling ; the clergyman, on the contrary, was speaking out plain and clear, and the service preserved something of the ancient severity. In that church there could be counted no fewer than twenty-five families—father, mother, and children—all worshipping together as they should, and making a grand total of at least a hundred and twenty people, without counting the preacher and the pew-opener. This is very satisfactory indeed, because the parish contains only seventeen thousand six hundred. One churchgoer out of every hundred and fifty ! It makes one hopeful, because it reminds one of the Early Church in Rome, as depicted by M. Renan.

Then they walked down Pitfield Street and thought no more about the people but selfishly considered each other, and Valentine narrated all her adventures, and told of Melenda's stubborn independence, and of Lotty, and of Lizzie, and her own experiment of a long day's work. Only she concealed her great discovery.

' You must never do that again, Valentine,' said Claude, referring to the day's work. ' Promise me you will not.'

' I do not think I could. But oh ! think of those poor girls working every day and all day long, and for so little ! Is it just and right ? Who is to blame for it, Claude ? '

' The system, I suppose, is to blame—whatever the system may be. I have never considered the subject of the English Industries except when Sam forces his own opinions upon one.'

' But it concerns you, Claude ; and Melenda is your—our sister.'

' Why do they go on doing such work, I wonder ? There are other things to do. But Melenda will not brook any interference. How can one help a girl who will not accept any help ? What can I do ? '

Valentine made no reply. She was disappointed. Claude did not respond to her own enthusiasm. To him it was no new thing to hear that working girls are disgracefully paid and cruelly worked. It is, alas ! no new thing to any of us. We hear about them every day, yet the thing goes on.

' Melenda might go into a shop, or she might go into some kind of service. Anything,' said Claude, ' would be better than what she does now. But she will take no help from me.'

' You might as well put a zebra in harness as Melenda into any kind of service. Can nothing be done to get them better work ? '

‘I don’t know. I will consult with Sam if you like.’

‘No, Claude, I don’t want you to consult with Sam. Consult with yourself. With all your knowledge and cleverness you need not stoop to take advice of a Board School master.’

‘My knowledge has not taught me how to deal with work-girls.’ Here he noticed a change in Valentine’s face. ‘I have disappointed you, Valentine. I knew I should.’

‘No, Claude. But I thought—I hoped—oh! I am so sorry, Claude, for those poor girls.’

‘Show me, then, some way to help them.’

At this point they reached the junction of Pitfield Street and Old Street. Here Valentine turned to the right, leading her companion past the old wells of Dame Annis le Clair and the Peerless Pool—but they were both, unhappily, ignorant of their historical associations—past the great Hospital named after the Physician Apostle, where certain Demoniacs, unhappy ones of the earth, wait for their release from the prison of unreason—it is brought to them by a Personage figured generally as a skeleton with a scythe. Then they passed a church which boasts the most amazing spire conceivable. In the whole of the habitable world there is to be found none other like unto it. Country people and strangers flock in multitudes to Old Street only to gaze upon this miracle of ugliness. Travellers are said to cross the Atlantic with no other purpose than to visit this, the ugliest church in the whole world. Why not? Any street might be proud of owning the ugliest thing that ever was built, and if people willingly face the perils of the deep to visit the most beautiful church in the world, why should they not incur the same risks for the sake of the most ugly?

At the back of the church there was formerly a vast burying-ground, because when St. Luke’s was built, a hundred and fifty years ago, the ground hereabouts was cheap. It is not venerable, as men generally reckon that quality in churchyards, by age, for the church itself has only baptised and buried five generations of mortal men and women. But it is venerable because here lie at rest the once aching bones of thousands who in their lives knew no rest. Here you will not find the remains of any great or illustrious men; they are all the bones of toilers; their names and histories are clean forgotten—even the histories of those whose heirs, in their pride, had the name and date of birth and death carved upon a headstone. The stones themselves still stand, ranged round the walls and within the railings, but no man readeth them any more, and if one doth perchance read them

the names, even to the oldest parishioner, awaken no memory. They have long ceased to bury in this Acre of the Lord ; the funeral verses of hope and resignation are no longer heard ; there is no more rattling of ashes upon ashes and dust to dust, and they have now laid out the ground for the children's play and a place of rest and meditation for the old. The graves are levelled ; the headstones are placed back two and three deep within the railings, where the garden mould covers them up within an inch or two of their deathless names, and so they stand or lean, with only the inscriptions visible, and look as if they were not churchyard stones at all, but the stone faces of the very original holders and possessors of the ground, stonily gazing without power either of spoken remonstrance or of approval upon the present use of their sleeping place, yet so great is the power of expression in a head-stone that one can plainly distinguish in some of them satisfaction ; and in some, doubt ; and in some, stern disapprobation. Two or three of the old railed tombs are left upon the grass to serve, perhaps, as the skeleton at the Feast. As for the ground itself, it is laid out in four fair lawns, each with a round bed of shrubs and a narrow bed of flowers. In the middle the ground has been artificially lowered, and one descends by a step or two into an area where they have erected a pedestal. Why a pedestal with nothing on it should have been put up passeth man's understanding : but this is the taste of St. Luke's, and we have only to bow before it. There are, one is pleased to remark, seats in plenty ; and the walks are asphalted and easy for the foot of age ; and they have planted trees which will perhaps some day grow tall and be umbrageous.

This morning there were in the garden a goodly number of old men and women with a great quantity of little children. The men sat together, and the women sat together, and they talked after their kind, which is a querulous kind, because old age is a term of life only to be represented in a favourable light by those who know how to conceal things and are rich enough to make themselves comfortable. These old people hear the voice of the grasshopper continually ; besides, they all have rheumatism, and they do not attempt to conceal that they hate the voice of the grasshopper and abhor rheumatic pains.

‘ Let us sit down,’ said Valentine.

‘ The problem of Melenda,’ Claude began, sententiously, ‘ is the great problem of labour. It is nothing less than the problem of the age.’

‘Then solve it, Claude. In the old days a knight was sent forth to kill a dragon or a loathly worm.’

‘Anybody could kill a dragon.’

‘Or to find the Holy Grail——’

‘If one were to find it now, people would first dispute its authenticity, and then they would stick it in a museum as an archaeological curiosity.’

‘But this is a task of much more interest than a doubtful relic. Is it possible, Claude, that you have never thought about Melenda and her life?’

‘Seriously, Valentine, I never have. Do not reproach me with selfishness. Her own independence is one cause, and then we have always been accustomed to go each his own way. Sam goes one way, Joe another, Melenda another. The only way that I can think of to help such a girl, so fiercely independent, is to alter the system itself, and that so radically that these miserable wages shall be made impossible. And it has never occurred to me that I should try to do this. Had I the lever of Archimedes I could not do it.’

‘Yet I think—if I were you, Claude—I think that I would try,’ she replied, slowly.

‘I have read books and treatises on Rent, Production, and so forth. Everybody reads these things, especially a barrister who wants all the information that he can get from every side. But certainly not with a view of inventing or preaching any new system.’

‘Never mind the books, Claude. Look at the people, not the theories. Here is our own sister, Melenda. This poor thing is condemned to a life that is only better than a slave’s because she thinks she has kept her independence and because she cannot be tied up and flogged. Our own sister, Claude! She is miserably fed and wretchedly clothed ; she is always half-starving and she goes in pitiful rags. Her very pride and her independence make her misery cry out the louder for your help. Your own sister—our sister. And she is so brave and so fierce. Our honour is concerned, Claude ; we must try ; if we cannot help her any other way, we will help her by altering the System, even if we have to call in Sam, and all become Socialists. It is for Violet’s sake and mine, Claude, as well as your own. How can we endure to live in happiness while she lives in such misery?’

‘Yes, Valentine, yes.’ Claude was moved by her emotion.

‘ You are right. It concerns me, you, Violet—all of us. And I am a selfish creature. But—what am I to do?’

‘ I do not know,’ she replied impatiently. ‘ What is the use of education and knowledge if they cannot be used to find out things? Have you become a Fellow of Trinity and a great scholar and a lawyer only for your own advancement, Claude?’

Claude made no reply, for, you see, his own personal advancement was exactly what he had always considered the ultimate end and object of any success he might make in life. He had always put the thing to himself from this point of view; he intended to get on, to climb as high as he could, and to do the best he might for himself. He had climbed already from the washerwoman’s cottage on the edge of Hackney Marsh to the Trinity Combination Room, which is a good way up the hill, and he was continually thirsting for opportunities to climb higher still. When he took the prizes at school; when he carried off scholarships at College; when he stood third in the First Class of the Classical Tripos, he felt himself answering the end of his existence, and justifying Lady Mildred’s sagacity in picking him out from among so many. His own advancement! Why yes—his own, and no other’s.

‘ Do not be angry with me, Claude,’ she pleaded. ‘ Only this morning, before you came, while I was thinking of these poor girls, something I had read somewhere came into my mind. It was to the effect that all great things are done by strong men; each thing by one strong man, who knows what he means and is strong enough to make other men work for him. If that is true, we should be always praying for a strong man.’

‘ I suppose we should.’

‘ Why should not you, Claude, be the strong man?’

‘ Because I am not a strong man, and because my own work has been laid down for me on other lines.’

‘ That is only your own work for yourself.’

‘ Yes—yes, of course,’ he replied a little uneasily. ‘ But then it is work which leaves no time for anything else.’

Suppose you have chosen deliberately the work which seems to suit you best, and the goal which seems desirable above all others as the noblest and highest; suppose you have good reason to believe that you will succeed; suppose in fact that you are perfectly satisfied with yourself, and that suddenly you are shaken to your very centre by the information that your aims are merely personal and selfish; that you are called upon to undertake

certain other work which may cause you to change your whole plan of life ; that everything you value must be abandoned if you obeyed that call ;—this was the new light which flashed suddenly upon Claude's brain on that July morning as he sat among the ashes of the obscure dead and among the houses of the obscure living. Dead and living, he belonged to them ; they were his own forefathers who lay sleeping beneath his feet ; they were his sisters who worked in the houses around him. He belonged to them. But never before had it occurred to him that he might work for them instead of for himself.

‘ Seriously, Valentine, I do not think you understand what it is you propose. Do you really mean that I should set myself to finding out a remedy for evils which have defied every professor of political economy ? ’

‘ I mean that seriously.’

‘ But what am I, Valentine, that I should discover an answer to the questions which have baffled all the greybeards ? ’

‘ Perhaps the answer must come from the young. Oh ! do you think that Paul waited till he was grey before he began to speak ? ’

Sometimes it seems to me as if Valentine struck here upon a great and remarkable truth. We have perhaps been all along asking too much of the old. It is perhaps from the young, while their hearts are full of generous emotions and unselfish sacrifice is still possible, that an answer to all great questions may be expected. The world belongs in fact to the young ; not only the world to enjoy but the world to fight ; the future is in the shaping of their hands ; theirs is the inheritance ; they are the princes and the governors, the Sheikhs and the Emirs, the Generals and the Captains. The old may go on accumulating and storing, relating and writing ; that is properly their department ; they are historians. As for new and great ideas, they are too much for them ; when one such idea is conceived and one such great scheme is brought forth, the old philosopher, the veteran economist, the defender of Vested interests, the man of sixty-year-old ideas, will very naturally bring out his watering-pot and turn the rose on to that idea, and point out the real wickedness of the world, the selfishness of man, and the unremitting watchfulness required by this project, all of which render the scheme impracticable and impossible. Then the young men will use much the same language as that employed by certain unlucky village children towards a certain Prophet of old, but with a different conclusion to the story. For in my story the children would kill the bears.

‘Everything,’ said Claude, ‘up to the present has been driving me farther from my own people; even, I thought, the recovery of my sister. It will be strange if she should take me back to them. Let me think, Valentine. I acknowledge the obligation, but I declare that I can do nothing. Why should I waste myself in beating the air?’

For Valentine did not see, which was clear to himself, that such an effort, to be serious, would require nothing short of a man’s whole work with all his thoughts and all his strength. And even then he would most likely fail. Yet some small success might be effected. And the thing touched his honour. His own sister—not his sister in the Common bonds of humanity—but the child of his own mother, was one of those who lay tied and bound by strong chains in the dungeons of Castle Famine, held there by the great Bully Giant Competition. His own sister. But what could he do for her, except—and that perhaps in vain—give her all that he had? And so, like the other young man who had great possessions, he was minded to go sorrowfully away. For his own possessions were neither of silver nor of gold, but the far more precious things of knowledge, and wit and understanding—the things which would lead him to honour and distinction and men’s praise in the brave days before him.

At this point of their discourse there came ambling along the asphalte an old lady. Valentine seemed to know her, but could not recollect where she had seen her—a curious old lady to look at, because she walked delicately and gave herself airs such as might become a young and beautiful woman. There were not now remaining many traces of former beauty, but as much perhaps as one expects after seventy years of a life not devoted wholly to the contemplation of things spiritual. She was dressed in a frock which looked ridiculously girlish, and as she walked she rolled her eyes about as if to watch the effect produced by her appearance.

‘Ho!’ said this dear old thing, stopping before Claude and Valentine. ‘Ho! Indeed! The young lady of the first floor back’—Valentine remembered her now. She was the old woman she had seen dancing all by herself: ‘The young lady with the new furniture’—she had inspected it through the keyhole. ‘I hope you are very well this morning, my dear; and I hope you are as happy as you are beautiful. Your lovely dress matches your lovely complexion, and if you didn’t make it yourself, it was made in Regent Street, and cost three guineas if a penny, simple

as it looks. Your pretty boots match your pretty little feet, and if they were not given to you they cost you a guinea a pair, and your gloves were four and six. Quite right. Quite right. Be as happy as you are beautiful, my dear—while your time lasts. Youth is the time for happiness. I was happy myself once.'

Neither her words nor her appearance produced an impression of the straitest and most narrow virtue.

'I am very well, thank you,' said Valentine coldly.

'With your young man. My dear, I said you had a young man. And he a gentleman. I said that nothing short of a gentleman would do for you. And he knows how a girl should be dressed, he does. Very proper too, my dear. I had the same sentiments as you when I was young.'

'Let us go, Claude,' said Valentine, rising.

Claude gave the old crone a coin, and she ambled away with a parting smile and a nod, very terrifying to behold.

'A reminiscence,' said Claude, 'or a survival of something in the theatrical way, I should say.'

'If I thought,' said Valentine, 'that I could ever come to look like that old woman—it is not her age and her baldness and her poverty, but her terrible eyes—I would go straight into a nunnery at once and hide myself.'

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PROFESSOR OF YIDDISH.

'I've been doing up the room for father,' Lizzie explained. It was Sunday evening, and about nine o'clock, when Valentine came home and met her coming out of the ground-floor room. 'I do it every night before I go out.'

'And you sit with him sometimes, I suppose?'

'No, I ain't fit company for father. He don't want me. He was a gentleman once, and he talks proper.'

'Have you got no mother or sisters, or anybody besides your father, Lizzie?'

'There's Melenda and Lotty. That's all I've got. Before Melenda taught me to sew I used to be a step girl.'

'What's that?'

'It's like this, you know. Some people—not here, but Kingsland way, over the Canal—like to have their doorsteps

cleaned once a week. That's what I did for 'em, at a penny a step, and sometimes three-ha'pence. When Melenda taught me to sew I gave up that. It was only a low trade.'

'Where is your mother?'

'She died long ago. There's only father, and he can't do nothing for me.'

If he knows how to 'talk proper,' Valentine thought, he might at least have taught his daughter the same art. She remembered the tall old man with stooping shoulders who took off his hat to her. Doubtless this was Lizzie's father.

'Is your father so very poor?'

'Dreadful poor,' said the girl. 'He was a gentleman once, but that was a long time ago.'

'Do you think he would let me call upon him?'

'I don't know.' She opened the door. 'Go in first and ask afterwards. Father, here's Melenda's sister says may she come in?'

'May she come in?' The old man raised his head slowly and repeated the words. Then he rose and bowed, offering his chair, the only chair in the room. There was no candle, but the gas-lamp in the street outside gave sufficient light to show that the room was furnished with a wooden bed covered with a rug, a table, a chair, a washing-stand, and a candlestick. There seemed to be literally nothing else at all. Strange to say, there was not even a pipe or the smell of tobacco.

'When a young lady comes to see me,' he said politely, 'the least I can do is to offer her a chair. Pray do me the honour to be seated.'

The manner and the voice and the words of the man were inconceivably out of keeping with the squalid place in which he lived. Valentine accepted the chair and sat down, wondering who this man might be. Lizzie stood at the open door watching her father with undisguised pride. It was long since she had witnessed any of these Reminiscences of Polite Society. 'Once he was a gentleman.' Why, thought Valentine, is he now a ragged gentleman, and how is it that he has suffered his daughter to grow up without any manners at all, since his own are so good?

'You have been kind to my daughter,' he said, still standing. 'Nobody, so far as I know, has ever before been kind to her, not even her father.'

'You can't help that,' said Lizzie loyally. 'It ain't your fault, father.'

'Therefore I thank you,' he added, without noticing the

interruption. 'My daughter is a work-girl, and is naturally more accustomed to ill-treatment than to kindness.'

'But I have done nothing for Lizzie.'

'You have given her dinner and supper, and you have spoken kindly to her. It is something that the girl should find anybody to give her anything. Yesterday evening I heard you singing upstairs. You have a very beautiful voice. I could play and sing myself formerly. But it is thirty-five years since I played last.'

'Have you forgotten how to play?'

'I have not played anything for thirty-five years,' he repeated.

'And now you live here all alone.' It was a weak thing to say, but one cannot always find epigrams, and besides, Valentine was still occupied in wondering what this strange thing might mean—the grey-headed, ragged man who lived alone in so miserable a room, and his daughter, who seemed to have nothing to do with her father except to look into his rooms once a day—a man in such a place who had the unmistakable manners and language of a gentleman, and the other who was nothing at all but the London work-girl—rough and ignorant, and ill-mannered.

'As you see,' he answered, 'quite alone.'

He sat down on the bed, his hands joined over his knees, looking at his visitor with large and lustrous eyes. His clothes were dilapidated to the last degree—his coat in rags, the elbows in holes, his trousers patched at the knees apparently by an amateur, and his boots gaping at the toes. He was picturesque in his rags. Lying on the bed was a tattered Inverness cape, and on the table an old felt hat.

A broken-down gentleman. It was apparent in his voice, in his speech, and in his carriage. By what unlucky accident had this poor gentleman got down so low?

Girls like Valentine are not accustomed to read a man's past history in his face, but she could discern that on this man's face there was not the seal of drink and vice. It was a face with refinement stamped upon the high white forehead, and gentleness in the blue eyes which met Valentine's steadily and openly, though with a strange sadness such as she had never before seen even in pictures.

'Nobody,' said Valentine, 'can be quite alone in the world. You must have some friends or relations.'

'Most men have. But a singular accident happened to me—a very singular accident'—he raised his voice with a strange

smile—‘about thirty-five years ago. All my relations died suddenly. All the relations I had in the world and all the friends in one day. There is not a single person now in the whole world who ever asks if I am living: not one who cares to ask me or wishes me back again. I have passed quite away, even out of remembrance: even out of the prayers of those who once loved me. For they are all dead. They all died on one day.’

‘And have you made no new friends all this time?’

‘None. Those who are so poor as myself make no friends. Twenty years ago I found a woman about the streets as poor and as miserable as myself. I made her my wife, and we shared our misery. Perhaps hers was lessened. Lizzie is her daughter, but she is dead. I have no friends.’

‘Poor man!’

‘I have not complained.’

‘Perhaps if you were to go “back again,” as you said, you might find some of your old friends. They did not all die, I am quite sure.’

‘Yes, they did. Every one. It would be odd, too, to go back to the old world just as I am now, and, if they were living, to offer them my hand. Sometimes I have thought of it. But there—what does it matter? As for the past, we live in the present and the past lives in us. Yes’—his voice sank—‘the past never dies: every moment lives for ever. That is the dreadful thing. Why, even the souls of the forgiven must go about for ever with hanging heads and shameful foreheads. Always,’ he repeated, ‘with shameful foreheads.’

This was the man who had ‘done something,’ Valentine remembered.

Lizzie at this point, finding the conversation just a note or two above her, went out and shut the door softly.

‘You have your daughter.’

‘Yes. But I can do nothing for her. You wonder that she is what she is. Young lady, there is a level—I have reached it and stand upon it—which the thoughts and habits of such as yourself would turn into a hell. Better for the child of the gutter to grow up in the gutter.’

‘You must not call Lizzie a child of the gutter. She is your child, and she is a pretty girl, and has refinement in her face if not in her manners.’

‘Let her remain where she is and what she is. Then perhaps she will never understand the nature of her inheritance.’

‘What inheritance?’

‘Lizzie is a great heiress; she will inherit the whole of my property if she ever finds out of what it consists.’

‘Your property?’

‘The accumulations of thirty-five years, invested at Compound Interest in Shame and Dishonour.’ The words were strong, but he spoke quite calmly. ‘It is so great a property that I cannot bear to die and leave it behind me. I should like to rob her of it, and have it buried in my pauper’s grave with me. Is it all my own making, this Property. I am quite a self-made man. When I began I had nothing of it. Yet that does not avail. I must die and leave it behind me. A man may take into the grave nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his hand. What profit hath he that he hath laboured for the wind?’

‘You read the Bible still,’ said Valentine, starting.

‘No, I read nothing. There is not a Bible or any book at all in the room: but I remember something of what I used to read. These are the words of the Preacher, who said many wise things. It was he who praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. I too, who am yet alive, praise the dead more than the living. It must be a beautiful thing to be already dead. There the prisoners rest together: they hear not the voice of the oppressor: the small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master.’

He said all this in measured tones, and without the least passion or sign of emotion.

‘You have no books. Can I lend you any?’

‘No, I do not want to read.’

‘Do you always sit here doing nothing?’

‘Always. It is my happiness to do nothing. Then I can live the past over again, up to a certain point, and I can follow the impossible future. I know,’ he went on, ‘that you would like to be helping me. Ladies who come to such places as this think they can set everything right by a few acts of kindness. I thank you, but you cannot help me. Look round the room; you see that I have reduced my life to the simplest form possible. Here is a place to lie down upon, with a rug to keep me warm; here is a roof, and here are walls; a chair, a table, a candlestick, a washing-basin—what more does a man want? I get my breakfast and my supper at a coffee-stall. When I can afford dinner I get it at a coffee-house. I neither drink nor smoke tobacco. I have no other wants than a certain amount of food and a place to lie down.’

‘You are a philosopher.’

‘No; a philosopher is contented, but I am not. I live in this wretched way because I have no choice. You are curious to learn how I live. Very well, I will tell you. It is an honest way. I know two or three languages—German and French and Italian. I learned them when I was young. I also—by accident—once learned some Hebrew. I have since learned a little Polish. I know where German immigrants congregate, and I write letters for them, especially for the Polish and German Jews—all kinds of letters, begging letters, letters asking for employment—at twopence each, or whatever I can get for a letter. They tell me their wants in their own language, which is generally Yiddish—that is to say, Polish and German and Hebrew mixed. Sometimes I do well; sometimes I do badly. Very often I do not make as much as a shilling a day. I pay three-and-sixpence a week for my room, and I can live on half-a-crown—fourpence a day. That is all; that is my life.’

‘Your present life.’

‘Yes, my present life. Young lady,’ he raised himself upright and sighed heavily, ‘there are some lives, some unhappy lives, across which Fate draws, right in the middle of them, a thick black line. My life has been so divided.’

The thick black line meant, perhaps, some kind of failure or bankruptcy, Valentine conjectured, such as reduced Lotty’s father to the profession of roader. Yet he spoke of Shame and Disgrace, and he was generally supposed to have ‘done something.’

‘I wish I could help you in some way,’ she said. ‘Let me try for your daughter’s sake.’

‘You say this because you are a young lady, and generous. But I want only what I have told you—food and a sleeping-place, and obscurity. Stay, you can do something for me. Will you sing to me?’

Valentine considered a little. Then she joined her hands and sang to him. She sang, ‘He shall feed His flock,’ perhaps because it was Sunday evening.

‘Thank you,’ said the man when she had finished. ‘It is thirty-five years since last I heard that sung.’

‘May I come again and talk to you sometimes?’

‘Yes, if you please. But it is not right for you to come here. Besides, I might get to look for your coming, and that would interfere with my dream.’

‘Your dream?’

‘While I sit here alone in the evening I am possessed by a dream. It is the dream of my old life, carried on just as it should have been. I follow myself in my dream step by step and year by year through the career which might have been mine, had it not been for that—that thick black line. If you were to destroy that dream, you would destroy my only pleasure. Then I should become discontented, and dream of revenge instead. That would be bad and foolish for me ; first because I never shall get my revenge, and next because thinking of it calls up the devil, who makes me fall into a rage and then claws at my heart and tries to drag it out of my body. One of these days he will succeed, and then the doctor will say I died of angina pectoris, because it is not scientific to say that a man died of a raging devil. If it were not for that I should dream of revenge perpetually.’

‘Oh, but,’ said Valentine, in the amiable manner of one who has no enemies to forgive, ‘revenge is such a poor thing to desire, and besides, it never satisfies.’

‘I don’t know,’ the man replied. ‘Simple killing does not satisfy. But something like the Eternal Revenge of Ugo Foscolo, you know, something to go back to at intervals, and when the old rage rises again in your heart like a flame. Ah !’ he clapped his hand to his heart, ‘it begins again.’ He gasped, and held his breath as one in sharp and sudden pain. Then he pulled out of his pocket a little bottle, and the room became charged with the faint scent of ether. ‘I must not talk any more about it. Sometimes I think that for ever and for ever I shall be punished for my sin by this flaming fire in my heart, and the burning desire for revenge. Well, I will not complain. Hush ! Do not talk to me any more. Let me get back quickly to my dream.’

She turned to go. Just then there came the sound of steps and a kind of scuffle outside the door.

It was caused by the old lady of the back room, who was being dragged, pushed, or assisted to her own room by a young man dressed in a black frock-coat and a tall hat. The old lady was apparently unwilling to go.

‘Is she ill ?’ asked Valentine.

‘No ; in these cases the illness follows the attack. She will be ill enough to-morrow. Come, old lady, off you go to bed.’

The patient began to sing, and even Valentine, in spite of her inexperience, was able to understand that her illness was caused by nothing else than a rush of alcohol to her head. In fact, the poor old creature was tipsy. She had been spending on gin the

shilling which Claude gave her in the morning. The man who was helping her got her into her room with a vigorous effort, and came out, shutting the door upon her.

‘There,’ he said, ‘she’s all right now. You’ll hear her making a little noise perhaps, but not much, and she’ll soon be asleep. Somebody has given her gin, and I suppose she’d had nothing to eat all day. The boys were chivying her about the street, so I brought her home. She will sleep it off.’ Then he looked into the front room. ‘Good evening, Mr. Lane. No more attacks, I hope?’

‘I had one just now, Doctor. I began to think——’

‘Well, then, you mustn’t think. I warned you before. If you get excited you’ll just kill yourself. How’s the Dream getting on?’

‘It is working itself out slowly, Doctor. Slowly the Career approaches its appointed end. A Deanery has been offered him, but he has refused it. A man of such eloquence and learning can’t be shelved with a Deanery! A Bishopric is the least that he will take. Sometimes there are thoughts about an Archbishopric. But I doubt whether there will be time on account of my thinking, you know, and the rages I fall into——’

‘You must not fall into rages.’

‘The other day I seemed to hear his voice. But it was only some one talking outside with this young lady. Yet it was his own voice—exactly his own voice.’

‘I have warned you, remember. Good-night!’

The Doctor shut the door, and turned abruptly to Valentine.

‘Well,’ he asked, ‘you are the young lady that was singing the other evening. What do you think about us?’

He might just as well have asked what Valentine thought about humanity in the abstract. She replied to that effect.

‘I don’t suppose you have come here without an object,’ he went on. ‘You have got something at work in your brain. It is charity or religion or humanity, I suppose. Whatever it is, if you want information come to me. I know all the people about here.’

He had a rugged face; his cheeks were without colour, as often happens to those who have lived always in the streets of a great city; he was neither tall nor short, rather a thin man, about thirty years of age; but he had a big head. His eyes were deepest under shaggy eyebrows—quick earnest eyes; his forehead was square, and his nose was large, rough hewn and distinctly ugly; his dark hair was parted at the side, and had already begun to

'go' at the temple; he carried his head a little on one side habitually. It is a mode which suggests a thoughtful disposition.

'Thank you,' said Valentine.

'You will want to know a good deal, I dare say. Very good then. To save you trouble.' He spoke in a quick jerky way as if he was wanted elsewhere, which was in fact always the case with him. 'Do we go to church? We do not. Do we revere the institutions of our ancestors? We do not. Have we any respect for rank and dignity? Not a bit. Do we care for anything but meat and drink and warmth and ease? We do not. Are we dangerous? Not so long as we are in regular work. Do we save our money? Not a mag. For whom do we vote? For the Radical, because he promises to tear things down. What is our political programme? The abolition of Church and Lords. Why? Because we think it will raise wages and lower the price of beer.'

'Thank you,' said Valentine. 'But I am not likely to inquire into the politics of the people.'

'Do we, then, yearn for Art? No, we do not. Do we love things beautiful? We don't even know what beauty means.'

'I do not expect to find Art here.'

'Are, then, our morals good? They are not. Have we any virtues at all? A few. We are tolerably honest; we are generous when we have any money, and we stand by each other when we are in trouble: man by man, woman by woman, and girl by girl.'

'Girl by girl?'

'Because,' he explained, irreverently, 'there is none other that fighteth for them, as your Prayer Book says, but only they themselves. So they stand by each other. There's a magnificent example in this very house upstairs.'

'Thank you very much. Good-night.' She moved towards the staircase, but he stopped her.

'One minute,' he said. 'I mean what I say. They tell me you are staying here. It is a queer place for a young lady to take lodgings in. Got a little pocket Gospel of your own to run, perhaps?'

'No, I am quite contented with the old Gospel.'

'Come to do good, as they call it? Well, you mean the best, I dare say. Don't do more harm than you can help. I'm always somewhere about the place if you want me. Good-night.'

He nodded his head familiarly, without the usual ceremony of lifting his hat, and hurried away.

*(To be continued.)*

## *To a Doleful Poet.*

WHY are you sad when the sky is blue ?  
 Why, when the sun shines bright for you ?

And the birds are singing, and all the air  
 Is sweet with the flowers everywhere ?  
 If life have thorns, it has roses too.

Be wise and be merry. 'Tis half untrue  
 Your doleful song. You have work to do.  
 If the work be good, and the world so fair,  
 Why are you sad ?

Life's sorrows are many, its joys so few !  
 Ah ! sing of the joys ! Let the dismal crew  
 Of black thoughts bide in their doleful lair.  
 Give us glad songs ; sing us free from care.  
 Gladness maketh the world anew.  
 Why are you sad ?

### AN ANSWER.

Why am I sad when the sky is blue,  
 You ask, O friend, and I answer you—  
 I love the sun and the balmy air,  
 The flowers and glad things everywhere.  
 But if life be merry, 'tis earnest too.  
 And the earnest hour, if hope be true,  
 Must be solemn or sad ; for the work we do  
 Is little and weak. Ask the world so fair  
 Why I am sad.

For me glad hours are no wise few.  
 But life is so serious—ship and crew  
 Bound such a voyage to death's dark lair.  
 My work is my happy song : but care  
 Still steals on the quiet hour anew,  
 And makes it sad !

H. COURTHOPE BOWEN.

## *Hours of Spring.*

IT is sweet on awaking in the early morn to listen to the small bird singing on the tree. No sound of voice or flute is like to the bird's song ; there is something in it distinct and separate from all other notes. The throat of woman gives forth a more perfect music, and the organ is the glory of man's soul. The bird upon the tree utters the meaning of the wind—a voice of the grass and wildflower, words of the green leaf ; they speak through that slender tone. Sweetness of dew and rifts of sunshine, the dark hawthorn touched with breadths of open bud, the odour of the air, the colour of the daffodil—all that is delicious and beloved of spring-time are expressed in his song. Genius is nature, and his lay, like the sap in the bough from which he sings, rises without thought. Nor is it necessary that it should be a song ; a few short notes in the sharp spring morning are sufficient to stir the heart. But yesterday the least of them all came to a bough by my window, and in his call I heard the sweetbriar wind rushing over the young grass. Refulgent fall the golden rays of the sun ; a minute only, the clouds cover him and the hedge is dark. The bloom of the gorse is shut like a book ; but it is there—a few hours of warmth and the covers will fall open. The meadow is bare, but in a little while the heart-shaped celandine leaves will come in their accustomed place. On the pollard willows the long wands are yellow-ruddy in the passing gleam of sunshine, the first colour of spring appears in their bark. The delicious wind rushes among them and they bow and rise ; it touches the top of the dark pine that looks in the sun the same now as in summer ; it lifts and swings the arching trail of bramble ; it dries and crumbles the earth in its fingers ; the hedge-sparrow's feathers are fluttered as he sings on the bush.

I wonder to myself how they can all get on without me—how they manage, bird and flower, without me to keep the calendar for them. For I noted it so carefully and lovingly, day by day,

the seed-leaves on the mounds in the sheltered places that come so early, the pushing up of the young grass, the succulent dandelion, the coltsfoot on the heavy, thick clods, the trodden chickweed despised at the foot of the gate-post, so common and small, and yet so dear to me. Every blade of grass was mine, as though I had planted it separately. They were all my pets, as the roses the lover of his garden tends so faithfully. All the grasses of the meadow were my pets, I loved them all; and perhaps that was why I never had a 'pet,' never cultivated a flower, never kept a caged bird, or any creature. Why keep pets when every wild free hawk that passed overhead in the air was mine? I joyed in his swift, careless flight, in the throw of his pinions, in his rush over the elms and miles of woodland; it was happiness to see his unchecked life. What more beautiful than the sweep and curve of his going through the azure sky? These were my pets, and all the grass. Under the wind it seemed to dry and become grey, and the starlings running to and fro on the surface that did not sink now stood high above it and were larger. The dust that drifted along blessed it and it grew. Day by day a change; always a note to make. The moss drying on the tree trunks, dog's-mercury stirring under the ash-poles, bird's-claw buds of beech lengthening; books upon books to be filled with these things. I cannot think how they manage without me.

To-day through the window-pane I see a lark high up against the grey cloud and hear his song. I cannot walk about and arrange with the buds and gorse-bloom; how does he know it is the time for him to sing? Without my book and pencil and observing eye, how does he understand that the hour has come? To sing high in the air, to chase his mate over the low stone wall of the ploughed field, to battle with his high-crested rival, to balance himself on his trembling wings outspread a few yards above the earth, and utter that sweet little loving kiss, as it were, of song—oh happy, happy days! So beautiful to watch as if he were my own, and I felt it all! It is years since I went out amongst them in the old fields, and saw them in the green corn; they must be dead, dear little things, by now. Without me to tell him, how does this lark to-day that I hear through the window know it is his hour?

The green hawthorn buds prophesy on the hedge; the reed pushes up in the moist earth like a spear thrust through a shield; the eggs of the starling are laid in the knot-hole of the pollard elm—common eggs, but within each a speck that is not to be found

in the cut diamond of two hundred carats—the dot of protoplasm, the atom of life. There was one row of pollards where they always began laying first. With a big stick in his beak, the rook is blown aside like a loose feather in the wind ; he knows his building time from the fathers of his house—hereditary knowledge handed down in settled course : but the stray things of the hedge, how do they know ? The great blackbird has planted his nest by the ashstole, open to everyone's view, without a bough to conceal it and not a leaf on the ash—nothing but the moss on the lower end of the branches. He does not seek cunningly for concealment. I think of the drift of time, and I see the apple bloom coming and the blue veronica in the grass. A thousand thousand buds and leaves and flowers, and blades of grass, things to note day by day, increasing so rapidly that no pencil can put them down and no book hold them, not even to number them—and how to write the thoughts they give ? All these without me—how can they manage without me ?

For they were so much to me, I had come to feel that I was as much in return to them. The old, old error : I love the earth. therefore the earth loves me—I am her child—I am Man, the favoured of all creatures. I am the centre, and all for me was made.

In time past, strong of foot, I walked gaily up the noble hill that leads to Beachy Head from Eastbourne, joying greatly in the sun and the wind. Every step crumbled up numbers of minute grey shells, empty and dry, that crunched under foot like hoarfrost or fragile beads. They were very pretty ; it was a shame to crush them—such vases as no king's pottery could make. They lay by millions in the depths of the sward, and I thought as I broke them unwillingly that each of these had once been a house of life. A living creature dwelt in each and felt the joy of existence, and was to itself all in all—as if the great sun over the hill shone for it, and the width of the earth under was for it, and the grass and plants put on purpose for it. They were dead, the whole race of them, and these their skeletons were as dust under my feet. Nature sets no value upon life, neither of minute hill-snail or of human being.

I thought myself so much to the earliest leaf and the first meadow-orchis—so important that I should note the first zee-zee of the titlark—that I should pronounce it summer, because now the oaks were green ; I must not miss a day nor an hour in the fields lest something should escape me. How beautiful the droop

of the great brome-grass by the wood ! But to-day I have to listen to the lark's song—not out of doors with him, but through the window-pane and the bullfinch carries the rootlet fibre to his nest without me. They manage without me very well ; they know their times and seasons—not only the civilised rooks, with their libraries of knowledge in their old nests of reference, but the stray things of the hedge and the chiffchaff from over sea in the ash wood. They go on without me. Orchis-flower and cow-slip—I cannot number them all—I hear, as it were, the patter of their feet—flower and bud and the beautiful clouds that go over, with the sweet rush of rain and burst of sun glory among the leafy trees. They go on, and I am no more than the least of the empty shells that strewed the sward of the hill. Nature sets no value upon life, neither of mine nor of the larks that sang years ago. The earth is all in all to me, but I am nothing to the earth : it is bitter to know this before you are dead. These delicious violets are sweet for themselves ; they were not shaped and coloured and gifted with that exquisite proportion and adjustment of odour and hue for me. High up against the grey cloud I hear the lark through the window singing, and each note falls into my heart like a knife.

Now this to me speaks as the roll of thunder that cannot be denied—you must hear it ; and how can you shut your ears to what this lark sings, this violet tells, this little grey shell writes in the curl of its spire ? The bitter truth that human life is no more to the universe than that of the unnoticed hill-snail in the grass should make us think more and more highly of ourselves as human—as men—living things that think. We must look to ourselves to help ourselves. We must think ourselves into an earthly immortality. By day and by night, by years and by centuries, still striving, studying, searching to find that which shall enable us to live a fuller life upon the earth—to have a wider grasp upon its violets and loveliness, a deeper draught of the sweetbriar wind. Because my heart beats feebly to-day, my trickling pulse scarcely notating the passing of the time, so much the more do I hope that those to come in future years may see wider and enjoy fuller than I have done ; and so much the more gladly would I do all that I could to enlarge the life that shall be then. There is no hope on the old lines—they are dead, like the empty shells ; from the sweet delicious violets think out fresh petals of thought and colours, as it were, of soul.

Never was such a worshipper of earth. The commonest

pebble, dusty and marked with the stain of the ground, seems to me so wonderful; my mind works round it till it becomes the sun and centre of a system of thought and feeling. Sometimes moving aside the tufts of grass with careless fingers while resting on the sward, I found these little pebble-stones loose in the crumbly earth among the rootlets. Then, brought out from the shadow, the sunlight shone and glistened on the particles of sand that adhered to it. Particles adhered to my skin—thousands of years between finger and thumb, these atoms of quartz, and sunlight shining all that time, and flowers blooming and life glowing in all, myriads of living things, from the cold still limpet on the rock to the burning, throbbing heart of man. Sometimes I found them among the sand of the heath, the sea of golden brown surging up yellow billows six feet high about me, where the dry lizard hid, or basked, of kin, too, to old time. Or the rush of the sea-wave brought them to me, wet and gleaming, up from the depths of what unknown Past, where they nestled in the root crevices of trees forgotten before Egypt. The living mind opposite the dead pebble—did you ever consider the strange and wonderful problem there? Only the thickness of the skin of the hand between them. The chief use of matter is to demonstrate to us the existence of the soul. The pebble-stone tells me I am a soul because I am not that that touches the nerves of my hand. We are distinctly two, utterly separate, and shall never come together. The little pebble and the great sun overhead—millions of miles away: yet is the great sun no more distinct and apart than this which I can touch. Dull-surfaced matter, like a polished mirror, reflects back thought to thought's self within.

I listened to the sweetbriar wind this morning; but for weeks and weeks the stark black oaks stood straight out of the snow as masts of ships with furled sails frozen and ice-bound in the haven of the deep valley. Each was visible to the foot, set in the white slope, made individual in the wood by the brilliance of the background. Never was such a long winter. For fully two months they stood in the snow in black armour of iron bark unshaken, the front rank of the forest army that would not yield to the northern invader. Snow in broad flakes, snow in semi-flakes, snow raining down in frozen specks, whirling and twisting in fury, ice raining in small shot of frost, howling, sleetting, groaning; the ground like iron, the sky black and faintly yellow—brutal colours of despotism—heaven striking with clenched fist. When at last the general surface cleared, still there remained the

trenches and traverses of the enemy, his ramparts drifted high, and his roads marked with snow. The black firs on the ridge stood out against the frozen clouds, still and hard ; the slopes of leafless larches seemed withered and brown ; the distant plain far down gloomy with the same dull yellowish blackness. At a height of seven hundred feet the air was sharp as a scythe—a rude barbarian giant wind knocking at the walls of the house with a vast club, so that we crept sideways even to the windows to look out upon the world. There was everything to repel—the cold, the frost, the hardness, the snow, dark sky and ground, leaflessness ; the very furze chilled and all benumbed. Yet the forest was still beautiful. There was no day that we did not, all of us, glance out at it and admire it, and say something about it. Harder and harder grew the frost, yet still the forest-clad hills possessed a something that drew the mind open to their largeness and grandeur. Earth is always beautiful—always. Without colour or leaf, or sunshine, or song of bird and flutter of butterfly's wing ; without anything sensuous, without advantage or gilding of summer—the power is ever there. Or shall we not say that the desire of the mind is ever there, and *will* satisfy itself, in a measure at least, even with the barren wild ? The heart from the moment of its first beat instinctively longs for the beautiful ; the means we possess to gratify it are limited—we are always trying to find the statue in the rude block. Out of the vast block of the earth the mind endeavours to carve itself loveliness, nobility, and grandeur. We strive for the right and the true : it is circumstance that thrusts wrong upon us.

One morning a labouring man came to the door with a spade, and asked if he could dig the garden, or try to, at the risk of breaking the tool in the ground. He was starving ; he had had no work for two months ; it was just six months, he said, since the first frost started the winter. Nature and the earth and the gods did not trouble about *him*, you see ; he might grub the rock-frost ground with his hands if he chose—the yellowish-black sky did not care. Nothing for man ! The only good he found was in his fellow-men ; they fed him after a fashion—still they fed him. There was no good in anything else. Another aged man came once a week regularly ; white as the snow through which he walked. In summer he worked ; since the winter began he had had no employment, but supported himself by going round to the farms in rotation. They all gave him a trifle—bread and cheese, a penny, a slice of meat—something ; and so he lived,

and slept the whole of that time in outhouses wherever he could. He had no home of any kind. Why did he not go into the workhouse? 'I be afear'd if I goes in there they'll put me with the rough uns, and very likely I should get some of my clothes stole.' Rather than go into the workhouse he would totter round in the face of the blasts that might cover his weak old limbs with drift. There was a sense of dignity and manhood left still; his clothes were worn, but clean and decent; he was no companion of rogues; the snow and frost, the straw of the outhouses, was better than that. He was struggling against age, against nature, against circumstance; the entire weight of society, law, and order pressed upon him to force him to lose his self-respect and liberty. He would rather risk his life in the snowdrift. Nature, earth, and the gods did not help him; sun and stars, where were they? He knocked at the doors of the farms and found good in man only—not in Law or Order—but in individual man alone.

The bitter north wind drives even the wild fieldfare to the berries in the garden hedge; so it drives stray human creatures to the door. A third came—an old gipsy woman—still stout and hearty, with green fresh brooms to sell. We bought some brooms—one of them was left on the kitchen floor, and the tame rabbit nibbled it; it proved to be heather. The true broom is as green and succulent in appearance in January as June. She would see the 'missis.' 'Bless you, my good lady, it be weather, bean't it? I hopes you'll never know what it be to want, my good lady. Ah, well, you looks good-tempered if you don't want to buy nothing. Do you see if you can't find me an old body, now, for my girl—now do'ee try; she's confined in a tent on the common—nothing but one of our tents, my good lady—that's true—and she's doing jest about well' (with briskness and an air of triumph), 'that she is! She's got twins you see, my lady, but she's all right, and as well as can be. She wants to get up; and she says to me, "Mother, do'ee try and get me a body; 'tis hard to lie here abed and be well enough to get up, and be obliged to stay here because I've got nothing but a bedgown." For you see, my good lady, we managed pretty well with the first baby; but the second bothered us, and we cut up all the bits of things we could find, and there she ain't got nothing to put on. Do'ee see if 'ee can't find her an old body.' The common is an open piece of furze and heath at the verge of the forest; and here, in a tent just large enough to creep in, the gipsy woman had borne twins in the midst of the snow and frost. They could not make a fire of the heath and

gorse even if they cut it, the snow and whirling winds would not permit. The old gipsy said if they had little food they could not do without fire, and they were compelled to get coke and coal somehow—apologising for such a luxury. There was no whining—not a bit of it; they were evidently quite contented and happy, and the old woman proud of her daughter's hardihood. By-and-by the husband came round with straw bee-hives to sell, and cane to mend chairs—a strong, respectable-looking man. Of all the north wind drove to the door, the outcasts were the best off—much better off than the cottager who was willing to break his spade to earn a shilling; much better off than the white-haired labourer, whose strength was spent, and who had not even a friend to watch with him in the dark hours of the winter evening—not even a fire to rest by. The gipsy nearest to the earth was the best off in every way; yet not even for primitive man and woman did the winds cease. Broad flakes of snow drifted up against the low tent, beneath which the babes were nestling to the breast. Not even for the babes did the snow cease or the keen wind rest; the very fire could scarcely struggle against it. Snow-rain and ice-rain; frost-formed snow-granules, driven along like shot, stinging and rattling against the tent-cloth, hissing in the fire; roar and groan of the great wind among the oaks of the forest. No kindness to man, from birth-hour to ending; neither earth, sky, or gods care for him, innocent at the mother's breast. Nothing good to man but man. Let man, then, leave his gods and lift up his ideal beyond them.

Something grey and spotted and puffy, not unlike a toad, moved about under the gorse of the garden-hedge one morning, half hidden by the stalks of old grasses. By-and-by it hopped out—the last thrush, so distended with puffed feathers against the frost as to be almost shapeless. He searched about hopelessly round the stones and in the nooks, all hard and frost-bound; there was the shell of a snail, dry and whitened and empty, as was apparent enough even at a distance. His keen eye must have told him that it was empty; yet such was his hunger and despair that he took it and dashed it to pieces against a stone. Like a human being, his imagination was stronger than his experience; he tried to persuade himself that there might be something there; hoping against hope. Mind, you see, working in the bird's brain, and overlooking facts. A mere mechanism would have left the empty and useless shell untouched—would have accepted

facts at once, however bitter, just as the balance on the heaviest side declines immediately, obeying the fact of an extra grain of weight. The bird's brain was not mechanical, and therefore he was not wholly mastered by experience. It was a purely human action—just what we do ourselves. Next he came across to the door to see if a stray berry still remained on a creeper. He saw me at the window, and he came to the window—right to it—and stopped and looked full at me some minutes, within touch almost, saying as plainly as could be said, 'I am starving—help me.' I never before knew a thrush make so unmistakable an appeal for assistance, or deliberately approach so near (unless previously encouraged). We tried to feed him, but we fear little of the food reached him. The wonder of the incident was that a thrush should still be left—there had not been one in the garden for two months. Berries all gone, ground hard and foodless, streams frozen, snow lying for weeks, frost stealing away the vital heat—ingenuity could not devise a more terrible scene of torture to the birds. Neither for the thrushes nor for the new-born infants in the tent did the onslaught of the winter slacken. No pity in earth or heaven. This one thrush did, indeed, by some exceptional fortune, survive; but where were the family of thrushes that had sung so sweetly in the rainy autumn? Where were the blackbirds?

Looking down from the stilts of seven hundred feet into the deep coombe of black oaks standing in the white snow, day by day, built round about with the rugged mound of the hills, doubly locked with the key of frost—it seemed to me to take on itself the actuality of the ancient faith of the Magi. How the seeds of all living things—the germs—of bird and animal, man and insect, tree and herb, of the whole earth—were gathered together into a four-square rampart and there laid to sleep in safety, shielded by a spell-bound fortification against the coming flood, not of water, but of frost and snow. With snow and frost and winter the earth was overcome, and the world perished, stricken dumb and dead, swept clean and utterly destroyed—a winter of the gods, the silence of snow and universal death. All that had been passed away, and the earth was depopulated. Death triumphed. But under the snow, behind the charmed rampart, slept the living germs. Down in the deep coombe, where the dark oaks stood out individually in the whiteness of the snow, fortified round about with immovable hills, there was the actual presentment of Zoroaster's sacred story. Locked in sleep lay bud and germ—the butterflies of next

summer were there somewhere, under the snow. The earth was swept of its inhabitants, but the seeds of life were not dead. Near by were the tents of the gipsies—an Eastern race, whose forefathers perhaps had seen that very Magian worship of the Light ; and in those tents birth had already taken place. Under the Night of winter—under the power of dark Ahriman, the evil spirit of Destruction—lay bud and germ in bondage, waiting for the coming of Ormuzd, the Sun, of Light and Summer. Beneath the snow, and in the frozen crevices of the trees, in the chinks of the earth, sealed up by the signet of frost, were the seeds of the life that would replenish the air in time to come. The buzzing crowds of summer were still under the snow.

This forest-land is marked by the myriads of insects that roam about it in the days of sunshine. Of all the million million heath-bells—multiply them again by a million million more—that purple the acres of rolling hills, mile upon mile, there is not one that is not daily visited by these flying creatures. Countless and incalculable hosts of the yellow-barred hover-flies come to them ; the heath and common, the moor and forest, the hedgerow and copse, are full of insects. They rise under foot, they rise from the spray brushed by your arm as you pass, they settle down in front of you—a rain of insects, a coloured shower. Legion is a little word for the butterflies ; the dry pastures among the woods are brown with meadow-brown ; blues and coppers float in endless succession ; all the nations of Xerxes' army were but a handful to these. In their millions they have perished ; but somewhere, coiled up, as it were, and sealed under the snow, there must have been the mothers and germs of the equally vast crowds that will fill the atmosphere this year. The great humble-bee that shall be mother of hundreds, the yellow wasp that shall be mother of thousands, were hidden there somewhere. The food of the migrant birds that are coming from over sea was there dormant under the snow. Many nations have a tradition of a former world destroyed by a deluge of water, from the East to the West, from Greece to Mexico, where the tail of a comet was said to have caused the flood ; but in the strange characters of the Zend is the legend of an ark (as it were) prepared against the snow. It may be that it is the dim memory of a glacial epoch. In this deep coombe, amid the dark oaks and snow, was the fable of Zoroaster. For the coming of Ormuzd, the Light, and Life Bringer, the leaf slept folded, the butterfly was hidden, the germ concealed, while the sun swept upwards towards Aries.

There is nothing so wearying as a long frost—the endless monotony, which makes one think that the very fault we usually find with our climate—its changeableness—is in reality its best quality. Rain, mist, gales—anything; give us anything but weary, weary frost. But having once fixed its mind, the weather will not listen to the usual signs of alteration.

The larks sang at last high up against the grey cloud over the frost-bound earth. They could not wait longer; love was strong in their little hearts—stronger than the winter. After awhile the hedge-sparrows, too, began to sing on the top of the gorse-hedge about the garden. By-and-by a chaffinch boldly raised his voice, ending with the old story, ‘Sweet, will you, will you kiss—me—dear.’ Then there came a hoar-frost, and the earth, which had been black, became white; as its evaporated vapours began to gather and drops of rain to fall. Even then the obstinate weather refused to quite yield, wrapping its cloak, as it were, around it in bitter enmity. But in a day or two white clouds lit up with sunshine appeared drifting over from the southward, and that was the end. The old pensioner came to the door for his bread and cheese: ‘The wind’s in the south,’ he said, ‘and I hopes she’ll stay there.’ Five dull-yellow spots on the hedge—gorse-bloom—that had remained unchanged for so many weeks, took a fresh colour and became golden. By the constant passing of the waggons and carts along the road that had been so silent it was evident that the busy time of spring was here. There would be rough weather, doubtless, now and again, but it would not again be winter.

Dark patches of cloud—spots of ink on the sky, the ‘messengers’—go drifting by; and after them will follow the water-carriers, harnessed to the south and west winds, drilling the long rows of rain like seed into the earth. After a time there will be a rainbow. Through the bars of my prison I can see the catkins thick and sallow-grey on the willows across the field, visible even at that distance; so great the change in a few days, the hand of spring grows firm and takes a strong grasp of the hedges. My prison bars are but a sixteenth of an inch thick; I could snap them with a fillip—only the window-pane, to me as impenetrable as the twenty-feet wall of the Tower of London. A cart has just gone past bearing a strange load among the carts of spring; they are talking of poling the hops. In it there sat an old man, with the fixed stare, the animal-like eye, of extreme age; he is over ninety. About him there were some few chairs and

articles of furniture, and he was propped against a bed. He was being moved—literally carted—to another house, not home, and he said he could not go without his bed ; he had slept on it for seventy-three years. Last Sunday his son—himself old—was carted to the churchyard, as is the country custom, in an open van ; to-day the father, still living, goes to what will be to him a strange land. His home is broken up—he will potter no more with maize for the chicken ; the gorse-hedges will become solid walls of golden bloom, but there will never again be a spring for him. It is very hard, is it not, at ninety ? It is not the tyranny of anyone that has done it ; it is the tyranny of circumstance, the lot of man. The song of the Greeks is full of sorrow ; man was to them the creature of grief, yet theirs was the land of violets and pellucid air. This has been a land of frost and snow, and here, too, it is the same. A stranger, I see, is already digging the old man's garden.

How happy the trees must be to hear the song of birds again in their branches ! After the silence and the leaflessness to have the birds back once more and to feel them busy at the nest building ; how glad to give them the moss and fibres and the crutch of the boughs to build in ! Pleasant it is now to watch the sunlit clouds sailing onwards ; it is like sitting by the sea. There is voyaging to and fro of birds ; the strong wood-pigeon goes over—a long course in the air, from hill to distant copse ; a blackbird starts from an ash, and, now inclining this way and now that, traverses the meadows to the thick corner hedge ; finches go by, and the air is full of larks that sing without ceasing. The touch of the wind, the moisture of the dew, the sun-stained rain-drop, have in them the magic force of life—a marvellous something that was not there before. Under it the narrow blade of grass comes up freshly green between the old white fibres the rook pulled ; the sycamore-bud swells and opens and takes the eye instantly in the still dark wood ; the starlings go to the hollow pollards ; the lambs leap in the mead. You never know what a day may bring forth—what new thing will come next. Yesterday I saw the ploughman and his team, and the earth gleam smoothed behind the share ; to-day a butterfly has gone past ; the farm-folk are bringing home the faggots from the hedgerows ; to-morrow there will be a merry, merry note in the ash-copse, the chiffchaff's ringing call to arms, to arms, ye leaves ! By-and-by a bennet, a bloom of the grass ; in time to come the furrow, as it were, shall open and the great buttercup of the

waters will show a broad palm of gold. You never know what will come to the net of the eye next—a bud, a flower, a nest, a curled fern, or whether it will be in the woodland or by the meadow-path, at the water's side or on the dead dry heap of faggots. There is no settled succession, no fixed and formal order—always the unexpected ; and you cannot say, ' I will go and find this or that.' The sowing of life in the springtime is not in the set straight line of the drill, nor shall you find wildflowers by a foot-measure. There are great woods without a lily of the valley ; the nightingale does not sing everywhere. Nature has no arrangement, no plan, nothing judicious even ; the walnut-trees bring forth their tender buds and the frost burns them—they have no mosaic of time to fit in, like a Roman tessellated pavement ; nature is like a child, who will sing and shout though you may be never so deeply pondering in the study, and does not wait for the hour that suits your mind. You do not know what you may find each day ; perhaps you may only pick up a fallen feather, but it is beautiful, every filament. Always beautiful ! everything beautiful ! And are these things new—the ploughman and his team, the lark's song, the green leaf? Can they be new ? Surely they have been of old time ! They are, indeed, new—the only things that are so ; the rest is old and grey and a weariness.

RICHARD JEFFERIES.

### *Baroko.*

1

THE Professor of Mathematics taught logic to a few of the girls at the Academy—the older girls, who were going in for many examinations. His real name was Brandon; but none of the students called him Professor Brandon, except to his face. Even logical girls will invent nick-names. They called him Baroko, and it was considered a good joke by the initiated to say that Baroko was in his worst mood. Nearly all the teachers at the Academy were honoured with new titles, flattering or unflattering, and generally containing some reference to their particular branches of instruction. The science master, Mr. Maddison, had been called Sirius, till some especially intelligent member of the class that dealt with ecliptics, parallaxes, and the like, discovered that Sirius was the dog-star. It was felt that nothing less than a constellation or a planet would do for Mr. Maddison, he was so universally popular; so from Sirius his name passed to Arcturus—or, sentimentally, the Bright One, or even ‘the Archangel.’ The amount of adoration that was lavished on Arcturus was incalculable; but luckily he was a modest young fellow enough, and it did not turn his head.

The girls could never understand why Arcturus had anything to do with Baroko. They were excellent friends, though Baroko was as generally disliked as Arcturus was admired. He looked too old, perhaps, though he was ten or fifteen years younger than he looked, to be fascinating. But a worse drawback was that, though he never got vexed, he was given to making the most bitter remarks in the coolest, blandest of tones. A master who wishes to be unpopular cannot do better than keep his temper and be sarcastic. One polished sentence does more to make his pupils hate him than a dozen ebullitions of wrath. They feel that the method is not just, that there is trickery about it, that it is heartless and cold-blooded. It is impossible to pay it back in its

own coin. Abuse they can understand, direct reproaches they can understand, and be sorry, and wish to do better, in order to please the person who has a right to reproach ; but about sarcasm there is something deadly and lurking that baffles, maddens, and hardens them. It may scare them into obedience, but it destroys faith and confidence, and the obedience will be half-hearted.

Sarcasm is too keen a weapon to be used on slight occasion. Professor Brandon had forgotten this. It is true that his habit of always speaking satirically, after the style of many popular critics, sprang from carelessness rather than from any ingrained cynicism or harshness of mood ; but then the logical girls did not know this. It is with the logical girls that we have to do. They were not extremely sensitive for the most part, and much of Baroko's refined satire glided over their heads, only giving them a vague feeling of discomfort, for which they hated him.

So far as learning went, the logical girls were very advanced. They knew a little about statics, a little about anatomy, they were always knowing and forgetting again the difference between the cerebrum and the cerebellum. They could tell the date at which Xerxes or some one crossed the Hellespont—that is, if they had recently got it up. It was the same, as regarded the majority of the class, with their other attainments. They knew Latin, and had been construing the first book of Virgil ever since anybody could remember, for when they came to the end they had always forgotten the beginning, and turned back again to make sure of it. Nevertheless, they were very advanced girls, and were going in, some of them, for the Higher Local Exam. This only required them to take one group at a time ; they could get it up in one year, and in the next forget it and get up another.

It was an exceptional class. There was only one backward girl in it ; and she was not stupid, but logic seemed to turn her brain. It was Molly Drummond. She was bright enough at music, and drawing, and history, and literature, and could even write bad verses in the albums of the other girls. Her arithmetic, truly, was a failure ; she owned, in fact, frankly enough to the arithmetic master, who was not Professor Brandon, that the other girls always did her sums for her ; but she considered it a sufficient expiation of this offence that she did their essays for them. The morality of the average schoolgirl is hazy. Would she do the sums by herself for once ? Yes, certainly ; Molly would do anything she was asked to do—and she did. They were wrong, all of them. They were more than wrong ; they were ridiculous.

Evidently the girl—seventeen too!—did not know her multiplication table.

As for logic, she had as clear a head for it as anyone when she chose. But she did not choose. She disliked the logical girls, whose virtues afflicted her with too painful a sense of contrast; and she consoled herself with the reflection that she could outstrip them if she liked, also that she dressed more tastefully, and was prettier than any of them, except Alicia Hargreaves. Alicia was nineteen, tall and dark and handsome, with a fine figure, and eye-glasses—gold ones. Nearly all the logical girls wore eye-glasses, except those who wore spectacles; and they were subject, most of them, to headaches and neuralgia. Molly was exceptional in having excellent sight and health and a fresh colour. She was not beautiful, but her face was very charming, with its laughing, yet earnest, dark grey eyes. Her figure was lithe and rounded, and she walked well, and seemed to dance by instinct. Altogether a winning girl, with a woman's power of passion and of sympathy, a greater favourite with the teachers, in spite of her idleness, than Alicia, who was first in everything. Alicia was really intellectual, and could understand satire more or less; but even Professor Brandon never made her his victim. She was too unimpeachable. Nevertheless, they were not attached to each other. There was even, as Molly Drummond soon discovered, an enmity between them, veiled by exceeding urbanity on both sides. Alicia was not to Baroko's liking. The fact was, she had detected him in a purely technical error years ago, and instead of passing it by she had brought it forward in the assembled class, and made the most of it. Everyone had forgotten the incident long ago, except Alicia and the Professor himself; but he never forgave her. He registered her in his mind as the type of an especially disagreeable woman, and solemnly warned Arcturus one day of the danger of allowing his appreciation of her talents to carry him too far.

‘Don't be captivated, my dear fellow,’ he said lightly, ‘by her interest in the megatherium. A woman has no real admiration for chunks of old red sandstone. You are young and handsome; and Miss Alicia persuades herself that she has a great liking for palaeontology. It is the palaeontologist she likes, my friend. The same with botany. She brought you a camellia the other day, I think, to ask you if it was an example of centripetal inflorescence. Certainly. If I had been young and handsome she would never have rooted out that unlucky——’ The Professor

paused and sighed. 'She would have sworn that Barbara was Celarent.'

'I don't understand logic,' said his companion, looking up with a laugh. Baroko was two inches the taller, being five feet eleven, and painfully gaunt. Arcturus was young and handsome, as the Professor said, and he was, moreover, a wonderfully winning fellow.

'Why do you talk so?' he proceeded. 'You know you are not really cynical.'

'I object to Miss Alicia,' returned the Professor snappishly. 'Beware of her, Frank, my young friend. She gives herself the airs of a Senior Wrangler.'

'I have a new pupil,' said Maddison, good-humouredly changing the subject. 'Miss Drummond—Molly, the girls call her. What do you think of her?'

'Think?' replied Baroko grimly. 'I can get nothing out of her. She is always staring at her ribbons. That girl wears new ribbons every time she comes to the class. No wonder she can't understand logic!'

'She is very bright at botany,' said Maddison apologetically.

'At botany? Yes. Girls *are*. It is a subject calculated—'

'Stop,' said Maddison, laughing. 'I won't hear any more.'

'I was merely going to say—calculated to inspire the weakest mind,' said Baroko blandly. 'Certainly I will refrain.'

The logical girls met that morning, and the two masters separated, Arcturus to the correction of exercises, Baroko to the sixth class lecture-room. The pupils were assembled, with books before them, and with weary faces that betrayed no natural affinity for logic. Only Alicia Hargreaves was, as usual, equal to the occasion. Molly was nervous, and well she might be, for she had not done her exercise, and the Professor had a reputation for being rigid in the extreme. He looked over the neat pile on his desk.

'Nine books,' he said frigidly. 'Hargreaves, Matthews—' he ran over the list of names. 'I should have ten. Miss Drummond, will you kindly hand me your exercise?'

Molly was frightened. She had only been half-a-dozen times to the class, and her first awe of the Professor had not yet evaporated. She was also tired, and her head ached, owing to previous dissipation. She had tried to do that exercise, but the logical girls were all too busy to help her. Moreover—and this

weighed her down with a sense of guilt—there had been a party last night in which she played a prominent part, and she could not help wondering whether, if she had not gone to that party—But regret came too late. Her fellow-students had been consoling her, since she arrived that morning, with the assurance that they should not like to be in her shoes, and she was inwardly quaking, though she lifted up a brave face.

‘I am sorry, Professor Brandon. I have not done it.’

‘Indeed!’ said Baroko, in a voice of profound civility just tinged with surprise, that scared her yet more. ‘Might I ask the reason?’

‘I could not do it,’ replied Molly, feeling very much ashamed of herself—she, who had been accustomed to place considerable faith in her own talents. ‘It was too difficult.’

‘Too difficult!’ repeated Baroko suavely. ‘I understood you to say that you had studied logic previously, Miss Drummond. How long?’

‘I studied it about a year,’ replied the doomed one, ‘in my last school. The book was different,’ she added desperately.

‘So I should have judged,’ said Baroko, ‘from your previous exercises. If you will kindly give me the name of the book which you have studied, Miss Drummond, I shall be happy to read it. It will doubtless cast new light on the principles of logic. As, however, your attainments are quite beyond the level—’

He had gone so far in the bland sneering fashion the pupils detested, when a smothered sob interrupted him. He glanced at Molly. She had bent her flushed face over the desk, but the next second she raised it again, and he saw how desperately and indignantly she was striving to keep back the tears. His heart smote him, though none of the logical girls knew that he had a heart at all. After all, he had been too hard; he should have remembered that Molly was a new pupil, and not accustomed to the cool, scathing remarks with which he was accustomed to indulge the logic students. He said no more, and the work of the class continued. Molly recovered herself and joined in it more or less, generally less. When she did speak it was to blunder, but the Professor was not hard upon her. If it had not been for the inevitable satire in his tones one would almost have said he tried to be encouraging. The hour passed slowly—very slowly, but it was over at last.

‘You may go,’ said Baroko. ‘Miss Drummond, will you stay a moment?’

One or two of the girls cast sympathetic glances at Molly as they went out. Alicia wore exactly the look of mingled hatred for sin and pity for the sinner which was appropriate under the circumstances. The Professor saw her expression, and it did the culprit very good service. As for Molly, she remained alone, feeling a little stubborn, utterly determined not to break down, however exquisite might be the torture; and sarcasm always harrowed her feelings most deeply. How could she have cried for that odious man! Why did he not speak? It was another method of torture. The Professor spoke:—

‘I think you are not quite equal at present, Miss Drummond, to the work of the class.’ He paused.

‘No, indeed I am not,’ said Molly proudly. ‘Thank you, I will not return to it.’

The Professor smiled, in spite of himself, at the idea that any of his pupils should adopt a tragedy air with him. But he proceeded, trying to smooth the satire out of his voice.

‘You misunderstand me. I think all you need is a little help at the beginning. “*Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*,” you know, Miss Drummond. (*Does she know?* he wondered mentally.) Your natural faculty is quite equal, I think, to that of any of the pupils, but as yet you have not chosen to apply yourself to the subject. But if you will come to my room once or twice we will just run over the old ground together; and you will soon be qualified to take your share in the class work. Let me see—when could you come?’

Molly looked astounded. It was, indeed, an unusual offer for Professor Brandon, who seldom troubled himself with his pupils out of class time, unlike Maddison, whose spare hours were filled up with coaching. Had she been mistaken after all? Baroko’s tones were not wholly reassuring; there was a very faint undercurrent of amusement in them that she recognised immediately. The Professor had not been used to deal with such a quick perception. But her glance met a kindly gleam in his eyes that disarmed her at once.

‘It is very kind of you,’ she said humbly.

‘Oh, not at all. I shall be pleased to give you any help. But I should like you to make an effort, Miss Drummond. It will repay you.’

His tones were more humanly cordial than Molly could have believed possible. She forgot how his satire had frightened her.

‘I will,’ she said earnestly, looking up at him with her

candid eyes. 'I am sorry about the exercise. And I am afraid—I ought to tell you—I made you believe—I *might* have tried a little more, but there was—a party!'

The Professor laughed out. He never would have done it if he had not been taken by surprise, but somehow Molly had thawed him completely unawares. His laugh cleared the air. Molly laughed herself merrily, with an instant perception of the humour of the thing, but she regained her gravity at once.

'I will not do it another time,' she said humbly, looking up into his face again.

How long was it, wondered Baroko dimly, since anyone had raised such clear and trustful eyes to his.

'I will do my best,' she added earnestly, and the Professor said: 'I am sure you will.'

It was with some trepidation that Molly knocked at Baroko's door the next morning. She had been trying to get up logic, but the attempt had been unsuccessful, and the ordeal was rather formidable. But there was a fire burning in the small room; and though Baroko seemed to have frozen up since yesterday, his frigidity melted before Molly's frank, girlish gratitude. One by one the difficulties vanished. Baroko found that it was pleasant work to explain things to Molly. The girl had brains, and a large share of intuition. They got on excellently, and the Professor did not cavil at the dainty ruffles at Molly's throat and wrists, nor at the knot of scarlet geranium. And Molly was fascinating. Schoolgirl as she was, the arts of fascination were—had always been natural to her. She had never been suggestive of bread and butter. Her instinct was to try to win people's liking, male or female, young or old; she could no more help it than she could help her hair falling in pretty brown waves. One could not justly call her a coquette—though, by-the-bye, very many did—her charm was too spontaneous; and it lay to a great extent in the consciousness that she would have suffered or sacrificed anything for one who had been kind to her, and whom she loved. She cared a great deal too much, probably, to win affection; but she was certain to repay it in full measure. On this occasion her desire to win Baroko's liking, and her desire to please him because he was good to her, were blended beyond the possibility of discrimination. To do her justice, she regarded him as about sixty, and never dreamed of what might happen.

The lesson went off brilliantly, and Molly rose to go.

'Thank you so very much,' she said. 'I am sure I shall

manage now. And thank you for not laughing at me,' she added on the spur of the moment. 'I mean for not being sarcastic.'

Baroko rose, but he seemed in no hurry to end the interview.

'Do you object to sarcasm?' he inquired good-humouredly.

'I can't bear it,' said Molly with her usual frankness. She had altogether lost her fear of this formidable professor. 'It goes through one. I don't mind what hard things people say if they will only say them straight out; but when they sound angelic and stab you—oh, it makes one *hate* oneself, and vexed with every one else besides. I daresay it is good for me,' she added as an afterthought.

'I will try not to inflict any more of it upon you,' said Baroko with some amusement.

'Oh, I had forgotten,' said Molly, blushing. 'I was thinking of people I know. Please excuse me. Thank you again, Professor Brandon, and good-bye.'

It was pleasant to see Molly's earnest and confident air when she next came to Baroko's study for what she called a private rehearsal. She was carrying a spray of sweetbriar that she had brought from home—it was her wont to bring flowers to all her particular friends—and she cast it down carelessly on the table as she shook hands.

'Sweetbriar?' remarked Baroko calmly. 'Ah, how pleasant it smells!'

'Isn't it delicious?' said Molly blithely. 'It always reminds one of old times. Take it if you care, Professor Brandon. I can get plenty more.'

'Thank you,' said Baroko, with grave courtesy, taking the spray from her hand. It would have been difficult to tell from his tones whether the gift pleased him, and Molly half fancied that she had been foolish to offer him anything so frivolous as sweetbriar. But she dismissed the subject with girlish light-heartedness, and it never crossed her mind again.

Baroko, however, took the sweetbriar home, and kept it in a vase till it grew limp and drooping. When the servant came in to dust one morning it was gone.

'If she notices its absence,' said Baroko to himself with a guilty conscience, referring to the domestic, as he stole the sweetbriar out of his vase, 'she will probably think that I have thrown it into the fire.'

After this Molly made rapid progress. Two months later, when Alicia, with an amiable condescension calculated to melt

the hardest heart offered to help her through a difficult exercise at the end of 'Jevons,' she was able to refuse the offer with equal amiability.

'Oh, I suppose Professor Brandon will help you,' said Alicia sweetly. 'I forgot.'

'Oh, no,' returned Molly, who, young as she was, quite understood the art of fencing. 'He only helped me once or twice at first, to bring me to a level with the others. Not with *you*, of course; but then you are so far above the rest of us poor mortals. Still, I can manage this, I think. It is not very hard,' she added audaciously, knowing that Alicia had complained of its difficulty.

'Isn't it?' said Alicia, with calm superiority. 'I thought it hard for anyone not very far advanced; but we shall all have to come to *you* for help soon, I dare say.'

She sailed away with an amiable smile. Sailing was natural to Alicia. Next Monday the logic class met as usual; and it was remarked by one or two observant damsels that Professor Brandon's countenance wore an unusually ethereal expression.

'The papers this week,' he said benignly, 'with one exception, show an utter misunderstanding of the whole subject involved. Miss Hargreaves, I regret to say that for once you have shown yourself completely at sea—a most unusual occurrence,' he added with heartfelt rejoicing, hardly veiled by tones of ultra courtesy. 'The only successful paper was Miss Drummond's.'

He darted a keen glance at Molly as he spoke. She flushed, but she did not look triumphant, as he had half expected. In fact, her predominant feeling at the moment was sympathy for Alicia, and she cast a remorseful look at that heroine.

'It won't occur again,' she exclaimed hastily, bent on soothing her rival's mortification. But Alicia's steady smile made her shrink back into herself.

'I had such a terrible headache,' Alicia said apologetically, after she had bestowed that smile of congratulation on Molly.

'Ah, I was sure there must be some excellent reason for the remarkable confusion of your paper,' observed Baroko suavely. It was too bad; but he did not believe in Alicia's headache; and she knew it. This was the more trying because she had told the truth.

Molly, half amused and half penitent, lingered a moment when the class was over to speak to Baroko. There was a book he had promised to lend her.

‘Well, Miss Drummond, I hope you are content with your victory,’ said the Professor, who was.

‘I have vexed Alicia,’ returned Molly serio-comically. ‘I couldn’t help it, could I?’

‘Certainly not. Miss Hargreaves will recover from the blow—in time,’ said the Professor, who could not resist the opportunity of giving his enemy a stab, even when she was not there. ‘I am very pleased with your success.’

‘Oh, I’m glad someone is pleased,’ said Molly half dolefully.

Baroko looked at her kindly.

‘You must learn to be less sensitive,’ he said, in a cordial, almost brotherly tone. ‘It doesn’t pay, Miss Drummond.’

‘Oh, how can I help it?’ exclaimed Molly, the tears springing to her eyes. Baroko watched her for a few seconds in silence; then he roused himself.

‘Here is your book, Miss Drummond. Don’t fret about Alicia, she will get over it. I fear you are too generous with your sympathy—not a very common failing.’ The satire returned to his voice with the last words; but Molly’s grateful, wistful look charmed it away again.

‘Good-bye,’ he said. He shook her hand more warmly than usual—it was generally like shaking hands with a fish to shake hands with Baroko—and hurried away.

## II.

It was near the end of the summer term. The Higher Local Examination was over, and Baroko’s logical girls, four of them, had won through Group D, almost by a miracle, and ‘satisfied’ the examiners. Only Alicia Hargreaves passed with second class honours; and the Professor congratulated her before the others in the blandest of all bland tones; while Molly, listening, smothered a laugh, for she, like the rest of us, was not averse to sarcasm when it was levelled at people she did not care for.

But Molly was leaving the Academy. She was eighteen, and an accomplished young lady. Her conduct, all the masters said, had been eminently satisfactory through the term. Baroko said so. Arcturus had taught her botany and geology; he said so too. There had been botanical excursions lately, which were very enjoyable.

The summer term closed with a garden-party, which was, everyone said, a tremendous success. But with the bulk of the

proceedings I have nothing to do; suffice it that the weather was glorious, and that the grounds were really excellent for a garden-party, with a tennis lawn and shrubberies and green alleys, down which the guests wandered at their will.

Molly was present, of course, looking extremely charming in a white dress, with her favourite red geraniums at the throat. She had never been like a schoolgirl; but to-day she seemed to have lost the last vestige of the type—for was it not her eighteenth birthday, and she thought that she was growing old! She played in a tennis match, and Baroko looked on. When it was over he went up to her. She had several cavaliers already; all the girls' brothers wanted an introduction, but Molly was not given to forsaking old friends, and she turned from the throng to greet Baroko.

‘I am tired,’ she said.

‘Come into the shrubbery; it is cooler there,’ said the Professor, in his old tones of calm authority; and the two marched away. Molly’s young cavaliers were dismayed and indignant; but they were Baroko’s pupils at the neighbouring College, and too much in awe of him to follow. So Baroko and Molly wandered down one of the green alleys together, and there was a smell of sweetbriar in the air.

‘So you are leaving us, Miss Drummond,’ said the Professor rather curtly. ‘You are not sorry?’

‘Indeed I am,’ exclaimed Molly warmly. ‘Sometimes I think I should like to go to school all my life. I have enjoyed everything this term.’

‘You will soon recover from the pang of parting, and in six months all you have learned will have slipped blissfully from your memory,’ said Baroko unkindly. ‘I promised, Miss Drummond, never to be sarcastic; otherwise I should say that your attainments were more brilliant than lasting. I never had a more promising pupil; but however quickly you have learned, trust me, you will forget much more quickly.’

‘Knowledge is not everything,’ said Molly a little proudly, for she thought the thrust uncalled for. ‘It does not make one happy. I know I shall forget; but I shall not forget the pleasure I have had, nor the kindness. You have been very, very kind to me, Professor Brandon. I shall not forget that.’

‘You think not?’ observed Baroko drily.

‘I don’t think—I know,’ said Molly indignantly. ‘Why are

you so unkind to me this last day? I was so happy, and now you have made me miserable.'

'I did not mean to be unkind to you,' said the Professor quietly, but with a sudden strange warmth at the heart. 'You have no truer friend. I am old and cynical—'

'No!' interrupted Molly hotly.

'Old and cynical,' repeated the Professor, 'and universally detested. That you have been able to place some confidence in me has afforded me great pleasure. I was wishing for an opportunity to tell you— Ah!'

He was conscious that a sudden thrill passed through the frame of his companion, and glancing at her face he saw it irradiated with a new light. The reason was not far to seek. At the other end of the green alley Arcturus was advancing—handsome and radiant, with a new fossil cephalopod in his hand that he wished to show Molly. In a moment he was at the girl's other side.

'And now,' said Baroko, five minutes later, with the old inevitable satire in his voice that was like a laugh, half bitter and half kindly, at himself and at the universe at large, 'I must leave you two, for I have an engagement.'

'Don't go,' said Molly earnestly. A transient doubt struck Baroko. Could he possibly have been wrong? He looked into Molly's candid eyes once more, and knew that he had not been wrong.

'I must go,' he replied suavely, turning away. 'You are aware that my engagements in society are numerous. You will be able to entertain Miss Drummond, Maddison. I know that she is interested in Fossils.'

MAY KENDALL.

## *Humming-birds.*

HUMMING-BIRDS are perhaps the very loveliest things in nature, and many celebrated writers have exhausted their descriptive powers in vain efforts to picture them to the imagination. The temptation was certainly great, after describing the rich setting of tropical foliage and flower, to speak at length of the wonderful gem contained within it ; but they would in this case have been wise to imitate that modest novel-writer, who introduced a blank space on the page where the description of his matchless heroine should have appeared. After all that has been written, the first sight of a living humming-bird, so unlike in its beauty all other beautiful things, comes like a revelation to the mind. To give any true conception of it by means of mere word-painting is not more impossible than it would be to bottle up a supply of the 'living sunbeams' themselves, and convey them across the Atlantic to scatter them in a sparkling shower over the face of England.

Doubtless many who have never seen them in a state of nature imagine that a tolerably correct idea of their appearance can be gained from Gould's colossal monograph. The pictures there, however, only represent dead humming-birds. A dead robin is, for purposes of bird-portraiture, as good as a live robin ; the same may be said of even many brilliant-plumaged species less aërial in their habits than humming-birds. In butterflies the whole beauty is seldom seen until the insect is dead, or, at any rate, captive. It was not when Wallace saw the *Ornithoptera ercesus* flying about, but only when he held it in his hands, and opened its glorious wings, that the sight of its beauty overcame him so powerfully. The special kind of beauty which makes the first sight of a humming-bird a revelation depends on the swift singular motions as much as on the intense gem-like and metallic brilliancy of the plumage.

The minute exquisite form, when the bird hovers on misty

wings, probing the flowers with its coral spear, the fan-like tail expanded, and poising motionless, exhibits the feathers shot with many hues ; and the next moment vanishes, or all but vanishes, then reappears at another flower only to vanish again, and so on successively, showing its splendours not continuously, but like the intermittent flashes of the firefly—this forms a picture of airy grace and loveliness that baffles description. All this glory disappears when the bird is dead, and even when it alights to rest on a bough. Sitting still it looks like an exceedingly attenuated kingfisher, without the pretty plumage of that bird, but retaining its stiff artificial manner. No artist has been so bold as to attempt to depict the bird as it actually appears, when balanced before a flower the swift motion of the wings obliterates their form, making them seem like a mist encircling the body ; yet it is precisely this formless cloud on which the glittering body hangs suspended, which contributes most to give the humming-bird its wonderful sprite-like or extra-natural appearance. How strange, then, to find bird-painters persisting in their efforts to show the humming-bird flying ! When they draw it stiff and upright on its perch the picture is honest, if ugly ; the more ambitious representation is a delusion and a mockery.

Coming to the actual colouring—the changeful tints that glow with such intensity on the scale-like feathers, it is curious to find that Gould seems to have thought that all difficulties here had been successfully overcome. The ‘new process’ he spoke so confidently about might no doubt be used with advantage in reproducing the coarser metallic reflections on a black plumage, such as we see in the corvine birds ; but the glittering garment of the humming-bird, like the silvery lace woven by the Epeira, gemmed with dew and touched with rainbow-coloured light, has never been and never can be imitated by art.

On this subject one of the latest observers of humming-birds, Mr. Everard im Thurn, in his work on British Guiana, has the following passage :—‘ Hardly more than one point of colour is in reality ever visible in any one humming-bird at one and the same time, for each point only shows its peculiar and glittering colour when the light falls upon it from a particular direction. A true representation of one of these birds would show it in somewhat sombre colours, except just at the one point which, when the bird is in the position chosen for representation, meets the light at the requisite angle, and that point alone should be shown in full brilliance of colour. A flowery shrub is sometimes seen

surrounded by a cloud of humming-birds, all of one species, and each, of course, in a different position. If someone would draw such a scene as that, showing a different detail of colour in each bird, according to its position, then some idea of the actual appearance of the bird might be given to one who had never seen an example.'

It is hardly to be expected that anyone will carry out the above suggestion, and produce a monograph with pages ten or fifteen feet wide by eighteen feet long, each one showing a cloud of humming-birds of one species flitting about a flowery bush ; but even in such a picture as that would be, the birds, suspended on unlovely angular projections instead of 'hazy semicircles of indistinctness,' and each with an immoveable fleck of brightness on the otherwise sombre plumage, would be as unlike living humming-birds as anything in the older monographs.

Whether the glittering iridescent tints and singular ornaments for which this family is famous result from the cumulative process of conscious or voluntary sexual selection, as Darwin thought, or are merely the outcome of a superabundant vitality, as Mr. Wallace with better reason believes, is a question which science has not yet answered satisfactorily. The tendency to or habit of varying in the direction of rich colouring and beautiful or fantastic ornament, might, for all we know to the contrary, have descended to humming-birds from some diminutive, curiously-shaped, bright-tinted, flying reptile of arboreal habits that lived in some far-off epoch in the world's history. It is not, at all events, maintained by anyone that *all* birds sprang originally from one reptilian stock ; and the true position of humming-birds in a natural classification has not yet been settled, for no intermediate forms exist connecting them with any other group. To the ordinary mind they appear utterly unlike all other feathered creatures, and as much entitled to stand apart as, for instance, the pigeon and ostrich families. It has been maintained by some writers that they are anatomically related to the swifts, although the differences separating the two families appear so great as almost to stagger belief in this theory. Now, however, the very latest authority on this subject, Dr. Schufeldt, has come to the conclusion that swifts are only greatly modified Passeres, and that the humming-birds should form an order by themselves.

Leaving this question, and regarding them simply with the ornithological eye that does not see far below the surface of things, when we have sufficiently admired the unique beauty and

marvellous velocity of humming-birds, there is little more to be said about them. They are lovely to the eye—indescribably so; and it is not strange that Gould wrote rapturously of the time when he was at length ‘permitted to revel in the delight of seeing the humming-bird in a state of nature.’ The feeling, he wrote, which animated him with regard to these most wonderful works of creation it was impossible to describe, and could only be appreciated by those who have made natural history a study, and who ‘pursue the investigations of her charming mysteries with ardour and delight.’ This we can understand; but to what an astonishing degree the feeling was carried in him, when, after remarking that enthusiasm and excitement with regard to most things in life become lessened and eventually deadened by time in most of us, he was able to add, ‘not so, however, I believe, with those who take up the study of the Family of Humming-Birds!’ It can only be supposed that he regarded natural history principally as a ‘science of dead animals—a *necrology*,’ and collected humming-birds just as others collect Roman coins, birds’ eggs, old weapons, or blue china, their zeal in the pursuit and faith in its importance increasing with the growth of their treasures, until they at last come to believe that though all the enthusiasms and excitements which give a zest to the lives of other men fade and perish with time, it is not so with their particular pursuit.

The more rational kind of pleasure experienced by the ornithologist in studying habits and disposition no doubt results in a great measure from the fact that the actions of the feathered people have a savour of intelligence in them. Whatever his theory or conviction about the origin of instincts may happen to be, or even if he has no convictions on the subject, it must nevertheless seem plain to him that intelligence is, after all, in most cases, the guiding principle of life, supplementing and modifying habits to bring them into closer harmony with the environment, and enlivening every day with countless little acts which result from judgment and experience, and form no part of the inherited complex instincts. The longer he observes any one species or individual, the more does he find in it to reward his attention; this is not the case, however, with humming-birds, which possess the avian body but do not rank mentally with birds. The pleasure one takes in their beauty soon evaporates, and is succeeded by no fresh interest, so monotonous and mechanical are all their actions; and we accordingly find that those who are most familiar with

them from personal observation have very little to say about them. A score of humming-birds, of as many distinct species, are less to the student of habits than one little brown-plumaged bird haunting his garden or the rush-bed of a neighbouring stream ; and, doubtless, for a reason similar to that which makes a lovely human face uninformed by intellect seem less permanently attractive than many a homelier countenance. He grows tired of seeing the feathered fairies perpetually weaving their aërial ballet-dance about the flowers, and finds it a relief to watch the little finch or wren or flycatcher of shy temper and obscure protective colouring. Perhaps it possesses a graceful form and melodious voice to give it æsthetic value, but even without such accessories he can observe it day by day with increasing interest and pleasure ; and it only adds piquancy to the feeling to know that the little bird also watches him with a certain amount of intelligent curiosity and a great deal of suspicion, and that it studiously endeavours to conceal from him all the little secrets of its life which he is bent on discovering.

It has frequently been remarked that humming-birds are more like insects than birds in disposition. Some species, on quitting their perch, perform wide bee-like circles about the tree before shooting away in a straight line. Their aimless attacks on other species approaching or passing near them, even on large birds like hawks and pigeons, is a habit they have in common with many solitary wood-boring bees. They also, like dragonflies and other insects, attack each other when they come together while feeding ; and in this case their action strangely resembles that of a couple of butterflies, as they revolve about each other and rise vertically to a great height in the air. Again, like insects, they are undisturbed at the presence of man while feeding, or even when engaged in building and incubation ; and like various solitary bees, wasps, &c., they frequently come close to a person walking or standing, to hover suspended in the air within a few inches of his face ; and if then struck at they often, insect-like, return to circle round his head. All other birds, even those which display the least versatility, and in districts where man is seldom seen, show as much caution as curiosity in his presence ; they recognise in the upright unfamiliar form a living being and a possible enemy. Mr. Whiteley, who observed their habits in Peru, says it is an amusing sight to watch the *Lesbia nuna* attempting to pass to a distant spot in a straight line during a high wind, which, acting on the long tail feathers,

carries it quite away from the point aimed at. Insects presenting a large surface to the wind are always blown from their course in the same way, for even in the most windy districts they never appear to learn to guide themselves; and I have often seen a butterfly endeavouring to reach an isolated flower blown from it a dozen times before it finally succeeded or gave up the contest. Birds when shaping their course, unless young and inexperienced, always make allowance for the force of the wind. Humming-birds often fly into open rooms, impelled apparently by a fearless curiosity, and may then be chased about until they drop exhausted or are beaten down and caught, and, as Gould says, 'if then taken into the hand, they almost immediately feed on any sweet, or pump up any liquid that may be offered to them, without betraying either fear or resentment at the previous treatment.' Wasps and bees taken in the same way endeavour to sting their captor, as most people know from experience, nor do they cease struggling violently to free themselves; but the dragon-fly is like the humming-bird, and is no sooner caught after much ill-treatment, than it will greedily devour as many flies and mosquitoes as one likes to offer it. Only in beings very low in the scale of nature do we see the instinct of self-preservation in this extremely simple condition, unmixed with reason or feeling, and so transient in its effects. The same insensibility to danger is seen when humming-birds are captured and confined in a room, and when, before a day is over, they will flutter about their captor's face and even take nectar from his lips.

Some observers have thought that humming-birds come nearest to humble-bees in their actions. I do not think so. Mr. Bates writes: 'They do not proceed in that methodical manner which bees follow, taking the flowers *seriatim*, but skip about from one part of a tree to another in the most capricious manner.' I have observed humble-bees a great deal, and feel convinced that they are among the most highly intelligent of the social hymenoptera. Humming-birds, to my mind, have a much closer resemblance to the solitary wood-boring bees and to dragon-flies. It must also be borne in mind that insects have very little time in which to acquire experience, and that a large portion of their life, in the imago state, is taken up with the complex business of reproduction.

The Trochilidæ, although confined to one continent, promise to exceed all other families—even the cosmopolitan finches and warblers—in number of species. At present over five hundred are known, or as many as all the species of birds in Europe together; and good reasons exist for believing that very

many more—not less perhaps than one or two hundred species—yet remain to be discovered. The most prolific region, and where humming-birds are most highly developed, is known to be West Brazil and the eastern slopes of the Bolivian and Peruvian Andes. This is precisely the least known portion of South America; the few naturalists and collectors who have reached it have returned laden with spoil, to tell us of a region surpassing all others in the superabundance and beauty of its bird life. Nothing, however, which can be said concerning these vast unexplored areas of tropical mountain and forest so forcibly impresses us with the idea of the unknown riches contained in them as the story of the *Loddigesia mirabilis*. This is perhaps the most wonderful humming-bird known, and no one who had not previously seen it figured could possibly form an idea of what it is like from a mere description. An outline sketch of it would probably be taken by most people as a fantastic design representing a bird-form in combination with leaves, in size and shape resembling poplar leaves, but on leaf-stalks of an impossible length, curving and crossing each other so as to form geometrical figures unlike anything in nature. Yet this bird (a single specimen) was obtained in Peru half a century ago, and for upwards of twenty years after its discovery Gould tried to obtain others, offering as much as fifty pounds for one; but no second specimen ever gladdened his eyes, nor was anything more heard of it until Stolzmann refound it in the year 1880.

The addition of many new species to the long list would, however, be a matter of small interest, unless fresh facts concerning their habits and structure were at the same time brought to light; but we can scarcely expect that the as yet unknown species will supply any link connecting the *Trochilidæ* with other existing families of birds. The eventual conclusion will perhaps be that this family has come down independently from an exceedingly remote past, and with scarcely any modification. While within certain very narrow limits humming-birds vary more than other families, outside of these limits they appear relatively stationary; and, conversely, other birds exhibit least variability in the one direction in which humming-birds vary excessively. On account of a trivial difference in habit they have sometimes been separated in two sub-families: the *Phaethornithinæ*, found in shady tropical forests; and the *Trochilinæ*, comprising humming-birds which inhabit open sunny places—and to this division they mostly belong. In both of these purely arbitrary groups, however, the aerial habits and manner of feeding poised in the air are identical.

although the birds living in shady forests, where flowers are scarce, obtain their food principally from the under surfaces of leaves. In their procreant habits the uniformity is also very great. In all cases the nest is small, deep, cup-shaped, or conical, composed of soft felted materials, and lined inside with vegetable down. The eggs are white, and never exceed two in number. Broadly speaking, they resemble each other as closely in habits as in structure; the greatest differences in habit in the most widely separated genera being no greater than may be found in two wrens or sparrows of the same genus.

This persistence of character in humming-birds, both as regards structure and habit, seems the more remarkable when we consider their very wide distribution over a continent so varied in its conditions, and where they range from the lowest levels to the limit of perpetual snow on the Andes, and from the tropics to the wintry Magellanic district; also that a majority of genera inhabit very circumscribed areas—these facts, as Mr. Wallace remarks, clearly pointing to a very high antiquity.

It is perhaps a law of nature that when a species (or group) fits itself to a place not previously occupied, and in which it is subject to no opposition from beings of its own class, or where it attains so great a perfection as to be able easily to overcome all opposition, that the character eventually loses its original plasticity, or tendency to vary, since improvement in such a case would be superfluous, and becomes, so to speak, crystallised in that form which continues thereafter unaltered. It is, at any rate, clear that while all other birds rub together in the struggle for existence, the humming-bird, owing to its aerial life and peculiar manner of seeking its food, is absolutely untouched by this kind of warfare, and is accordingly as far removed from all competition with other birds as the solitary savage is removed from the struggle of life affecting and modifying men in crowded communities. The lower kind of competition affecting humming-birds, that with insects and, within the family, of species with species, has probably only served to intensify their unique characteristics, and, perhaps, to lower their intelligence.

Not only are they removed from that indirect struggle for existence which acts so powerfully on other families, but they are also, by their habits and the unequalled velocity of their flight, placed out of reach of that direct war waged on all other small birds by the rapacious kinds—birds, mammals, and reptiles. One result of this immunity is that humming-birds are excessively numerous, albeit such slow breeders; for, as we have

seen, they only lay two eggs, and not only so, but the second egg is often dropped so long after incubation has begun in the first that only one is really hatched. Yet Belt expressed the opinion that in Nicaragua, where he observed humming-birds, they out-numbered all the other birds together. Considering how abundant birds of all kinds are in that district, and that most of them have a protective colouring and lay several eggs, it would be impossible to accept such a statement unless we believed that humming-birds have, practically, no enemies.

Another result of their immunity from persecution is the splendid colouring and strange and beautiful feather ornaments distinguishing them above all other birds; and excessive variation in this direction is due, it seems to me, to the very causes which serve to check variation in all other directions. In their plumage, as Martin long ago wrote, nature has strained at every variety of effect and revelled in an infinitude of modifications. How wonderful their garb is, with colours so varied, so intense, yet seemingly so evanescent!—the glittering mantle of powdered gold; the emerald green that changes to velvet black; ruby reds and luminous scarlets; dull bronze that brightens and burns like polished brass, and pale neutral tints that kindle to rose and lilac-coloured flame. And to the glory of prismatic colouring is added feather decorations, such as the racket-plumes and downy muffs of *Spathura*, the crest and frills of *Lophornis*, the sapphire gorget burning on the snow-white breast of *Oreotrochilus*, the fiery tail of *Cometes*, and, amongst grotesque forms, the long pointed crest-feathers, representing horns, and flowing white beard adorning the piebald goat-like face of *Oxypogon*.

Excessive variation in this direction is checked in nearly all other birds by the need of a protective colouring, few kinds so greatly excelling in strength and activity as to be able to maintain their existence without it. Bright feathers constitute a double danger, for not only do they render their possessor conspicuous, but, just as the butterfly chooses the gayest flower, so do hawks deliberately single out from many obscure birds the one with brilliant plumage; but they do not waste their energies in the vain pursuit of humming-birds. These are in the position of neutrals, free to range at will amidst the combatants, insulting all alike, and flaunting their splendid colours with impunity. They are nature's favourites, endowed with faculties bordering on the miraculous, and all other kinds, gentle or fierce, ask only to be left alone by them.

W. H. HUDSON.

## *May-tide.*

THIS is the hour, the day,  
 The time, the season sweet !  
 Quick, hasten, laggard feet !  
 Brook not delay !  
 Love flies, youth passes, May-tide will not last :  
 Forth, forth while yet 'tis time, before the spring is past.

The summer's glories shine  
 From all her garden ground,  
 With lilies prankt around  
 And roses fine ;  
 But the pink blooms or white upon the bursting trees,  
 Primrose and violet sweet, what charm has June like these ?

This is the time of song ;  
 From many a joyous throat,  
 Mute all the dull year long,  
 Soars love's clear note.  
 Summer is dumb, and faint with dust and heat :  
 This is the mirthful time, when every sound is sweet.

Fair day of larger light,  
 Life's own appointed hour,  
 Young souls bud forth in white ;  
 The world's a-flower.  
 Thrill youthful heart, soar upward limpid voice !  
 Blossoming time is here : rejoice ! rejoice ! rejoice !

LEWIS MORRIS.

## *An Autumn Holiday.*

### CHAPTER I.

#### A NEW DEPARTURE.

WALTER ERSKINE was bitterly disappointed at only getting a second in the final classical schools at Oxford. He had worked well enough, but moral philosophy and logic were not dear unto his soul ; and these recondite studies avenged themselves on their grudging disciple by refusing to be entirely amenable when he was confronted by his examination papers.

And now that he had staked his all—for so it seemed to him at the time—on one deal of the cards in this game of luck and skill combined, he felt with the poor little girl in *Punch*, that his doll, too, was stuffed with sawdust, and that the world for him henceforth was hollow.

He blamed himself for not reading harder in the last ‘Long.’ He blamed the examiners for not rightly appreciating the real depth and breadth of mind displayed in his several papers, and the exquisite taste and subtlety of his scholastic criticisms. He next extended his freehanded censure to the Board of Studies for compounding a classical school that is not classical at all, but a mongrel nondescript, unhappily begotten from the ill-assorted union of ancient and modern philosophies, history, logic, and classics last and least of all. And he concluded by impartially blaming a Providence that had given him no more than an average brain development, together with too great an interest in outdoor pursuits, more especially in No. 3’s place in the Balliol ‘eight.’ He forgot that he might have been worse off ; that the second class has a lower deep, if not two, seeing that his friend Daunt, of Magdalen, was comfortably relegated to the ‘fourth.’ He forgot, moreover, that Providence has a broad back, which

can easily carry all that its human detractors choose to put upon it.

For the nonce he was smarting under disappointment, moody, sullen, and restless, though his ordinary disposition was pleasant and genial enough, while the bright gleam of welcome that could shine from his hazel eyes had given many a fair damsel a passing flutter of pleasure. If he had not the brains of one of those dry Corpus dons, he had a pleasant, manly English face, and a strong, well-knit frame to keep it company.

But with the shadow of recent failure upon him, and a terrible heap of unpaid bills accumulating in his dressing-table drawer, he was in no mood to enjoy the mild summer dissipations of his Shropshire home. Sad to say, tea and lawn-tennis actually jarred on the finer feelings of his sensitive and stricken soul. At these social and cheap festivities he cared nothing if he lost a sett at '5 games all.' And when a man is unmoved at such a catastrophe as that, you may rely upon it he is in a very bad way indeed.

No longer did his eye rest somewhat lovingly upon those nice Miss Corbets. No more did he ride through Cresthope, a mile or more out of his way coming home from Andsover, on the very off-chance of just meeting Miss Dorothy Townshend in that favoured lane. The last-named fair girl was indeed quite low-spirited on the subject, if the truth be told. 'It used to be so pleasant before when Mr. Erskine came home in the summer; he was always so kind and so attentive, while now——' with a sigh and a pretty *move*, half-tearful, half-laughingly impatient at the ways of those sad creatures, men.

Walter, alas! was little interested in the emotions that he might be causing in his fair neighbour's bosom. For a fortnight since what he pleasantly termed his *fiasco*, one day came and went after another alike indifferent to him, save that, with undiminished volume, fresh bills came in by every post. July was drawing to a close, for once adorning England with all the warmth of fervent summer.

But on one of the last few remaining mornings of the month a letter which did not look like a bill was laid on Walter's plate by his attentive younger sister—a letter, too, which not only woke him from his peevish lethargy, but put it to flight for ever. Oxford men are but boys of a larger growth, and have their passing tempers with the best or worst of them.

We will take the liberty of reading it over his shoulder. ('There is no way but this,' as *Virginius* observed.)

Glenfinnart House, Langwell, N.B.

DEAR ERSKINE,

In these far northern lands news travels slowly, but I saw your name in the papers at last, and am sorry you are ‘conjectus in secundam classem,’ as the barbaric mediæval Latins phrase it. Never mind, old boy, you will yet live to learn that there are other things on the broad earth forbye blue papers, with the magic word ‘primam’ writ large thereon.

I was up in Glen Brayne the other day. Did I tell you before we have let the place to one Roberts? He is a Glasgow man, they tell me, and has realised more than a moderate competency by retailing or ‘wholesaling’ (if there is such a word) scientific manure—I beg its pardon, I should have said superphosphates. However, I hear he is a decent body, while his family—more especially those of the female persuasion—are said to be charming. But *οὐδέν μοι μέλει*—we don’t care so long as we lift the rent.

They are coming up on the 10th August. I had everything in apple-pie order for them, and left the Glen happy in the proud belief that our tenants would think us ideal landlords, when this morning comes a dirty scrawl from the wife of your old friend Charlie, the stalker, to say that he has broken his leg, and never a bit of forest work will he do this season. He sends word that he was carrying wood, but I rather suspect him of carrying whisky. You know his old ways. ‘*Io, Bacche! quo me rapis plenum tui?*’ hey, you classical dog? You aren’t the only one who can give a real bit of pedantic and uncalled-for quotation when he has the mind.

But alas! it is ill jesting with a saddened heart, and where to get an experienced stalker at this eleventh hour, Lord only knows.

So I remain, ever yours,

July 28, 188—.

DUNCAN TOMLINE.

This letter brought up visions of happy days in former years, when Walter’s own family had been the Tomlines’ tenants, and under the skilful guidance of Charlie, the stalker, many a heavy stag had fallen. How well he remembered each hill and corrie! And now, as his sister Patience called him to come out with her to the garden and see what rosebuds the dewy morning had brought to gathering point, it struck him forcibly that it would be a very delightful thing to be in those wild corries once more,

‘Well, Patience, Duncan writes me that Charlie has broken his leg, poor man, and he doesn’t know where to look for a keeper. I have half a mind to offer my own services. Now, don’t laugh’—as a winsome grin passed over the merry girl’s face—‘I have seen a good deal of forest work, and know that ground well. I would go “ineog.” and live up at the Blacks’ farm or Charlie’s shieling, right amongst the deer.’

‘It sounds as if it would be very nice for you to get a real holiday after all the “grind” you have had—pray excuse your own slang. I don’t think, however, that Sir James Tomline will be so ready to take you. And it will be hard work when the novelty wears off. You won’t be your own master for a single day.’

‘I don’t know that the novelty would wear off very soon. It will be so amusing to keep up the character before those innocent Glasgow bodies. Yes, I shall go there if I possibly can. The state of my exchequer will not admit of that “vain thing fondly invented,” a trip to Switzerland this autumn.’

And after a little more chaff on the subject, and divers new suggestions to bring the scheme more within the range of practical politics, and so secure an economical but congenial holiday, the brother and sister came up to the rose bushes at the end of the garden, and there, amid the mingled charms of the *Gloire de Dijon* and *Général Jacqueminot*, they filled Patience’s basket and scratched their fingers to their hearts’ content. But some hours later the lunch bell’s call found Walter’s thoughts still intent on the sudden notion that a few half-jocose lines from his Highland friend had put into his head, and the afternoon just before post time found him in the library pen in hand, with Patience specially retained to criticise and suggest language suitable to an application for the vacant post. And the result of their joint efforts in the good cause was despatched that night.

Essington, Shropshire, R.S.O.

SIR,

Having heard you are in want of a fairly respectable man as stalker for this season only, I have much pleasure in placing my services at your disposal. I am young and consequently foolish, and have little or no practical knowledge of what would—in the event of an engagement—be my everyday duties. That is to say, my training hitherto has been (ahem!) empirical rather than strictly scientific. But if gross ignorance in conjunction

with the wildest enthusiasm are any qualifications for the post, why then, sir, I can lay my hand upon my heart and say I am the very man you want.

I am unmarried, and drink whisky with studied moderation (not that I despise 'the light wine of the country'—far from it!). My terms would be one guinea per week, board and lodging found, and liberty to preserve my incog. so long as I care to do so. I can enter upon the duties immediately, and if, as my deep modesty leads me to suppose, you turn a favourable ear to my application, an early reply will oblige

Your very humble servant,

WALTER ERSKINE.

P.S.—I mean it, old man! You let me try my hand, and you shall have small cause for repentance. I want to work off the memory of that second class upon the mountain side.

Duncan Tomline smiled grimly as he read this novel application, and Sir James pooh-poohed the whole idea at first. 'Young fool, just now he thinks it will all be plain sailing, and the off days given up to philandering with old Roberts's daughter! But just let him wait till October month in the rough weather, bringing the gentlemen along in the snow maybe. They won't spare the keeper. I've always noticed your phlegmatic Englishman gets his blood up the last few days of the season, goes out all day and every day—cold, wet, misty, or impossible—and likes sitting out on the tops in a blinding snow-storm a deal more than his stalker does.'

Duncan 'concurred,' as learned judges do. But still the fact remained—they hadn't got a man. Next day would be the 1st of August, and if Erskine would really not play the fool he would be preferable to any one, however capable, who did not know the Glen Brayne ground. And as the younger laird pointed out this and other salient features, his father came down, by easy stages, from the phase of impracticability to the air of a man who listens as if there was 'something in it after all,' thence on to hesitation, finally to qualified acceptance. And so the bargain was struck, and Walter engaged on his own terms.

Mr. Roberts was made acquainted with the difficulty that had arisen. Duncan wrote, too, that he had managed to secure a man, one Erskine by name, who knew the ground well enough, was fond of sport and active, though young and inexperienced—moreover sober, respectful, and of pleasant manners.

Small wonder, then, if the unfortunate 'wholesaler' thought he had some ordinary Highlander to deal with, and despatched unto him a somewhat lordly missive, bidding him meet the dogs on such and such a day at the station and see carefully to them, adding that it was a sad pity the real keeper was laid up, but that he did hope all things would be properly attended to by his deputy.

Erskine, for his part, was much tickled at the new prospect opening before him, and at the authoritative tone of Mr. Roberts's letter. He was as impatient to be off as a schoolboy, and very little now did retrospect damp his anticipation of a good time coming. If visions of recent failure and of a drawer full of Oxford bills did now and then flit across his eyes amid the bustle of preparation, they left no more internal impression than the motes that are wont to dance before the eyes of some Indian nabob or colonel, whose digestion, thanks to a warm climate and a liking for highly-seasoned dishes, is not all that sympathetic friends can desire.

And so a few nights later the 'Flying Scotchman' bore him swiftly through the darkness northwards, with the few and simple accompaniments of a pet collie, a rifle, and a portmanteau. This last contained, *inter alia*—strange garments for a stalker—the full sombre splendours of evening attire.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE COUNTERFEIT PRESENTMENT.

GLEN BRAYNE LODGE itself is a pretty place. Standing as it does somewhat lower down the valley than the Blacks' farm or Charlie's forest shieling, its beauty is of a quieter, more lowland order. The house stands on a knoll some hundred feet above the river, and barely a stone's throw from it. The river takes a sharp, sudden curve, and only comes into full view from the house when just underneath it, issuing from a narrow fern-clad gorge by a tiny waterfall (for it is little more than a burn for all the noise it makes) into one still, deep pool that breaks away into a 'tail,' which might well hold a grilse, had not the ascent of those strenuous fish been unkindly hindered by the interposition of the 'Falls,' the height of which no salmon, however undaunted, has yet been known to scale.

So it is that the trout have it all their own way up above the 'Falls,' and a fine, blustering, active lot they are in the Glen Brayne pools: a worm that chances to fall in off the treacherous edges of the meadow grass has henceforth but a sorry time of it.

On past the Lodge the river runs for some distance at sober speed between rushy meadows, which are alive at this season with the curlew and the grey plover, while here and there a snipe will rise before the angler's foot. In these pastures the restless birds have reared their young, and view with loud-voiced dismay the coming of any whose business takes them to the fields. Poor birds! that their peaceful plans for autumn flitting should ever be nipped in the bud by the stealthy approach of some wretch in human form who applies an ill-looking infernal machine to his shoulder, and bang!—the flower of the flock, the father maybe of these two lovely 'whaups,' now cowering in abject terror and tussocks of grass, falls to the ground nerveless and dying, while his horror-stricken compeers, wheeling ever higher in the air, protest manifestly by their pitiful cries against this most foul and uncalled-for murder of one of the most respected members of the bird community.

On the afternoon of the 10th of August Walter was sitting on a low wall above the river and the road, enclosing what is known in Scotland as 'the park and policies,' though the 'park's' appearance would surprise the English eye. Kirstie, the housekeeper, was bustling about inside, putting a final touch here and there to the rooms, and betraying her nervous and expectant attitude of mind by an increase of severity in manner towards two comely, red-cheeked and stalwart lassies under her command. But she had all things in order long before the wayfarers could possibly arrive, and came out to the front door to accost the keeper, who was in old days a prime favourite of hers:—

'Eh, my bonnie lad, but you're a credit to the hoose in the capacity of stalker. But I wadna be surprised if ye mak a puir show wi' the talking and the manners of a Hieland ghillie when it comes to the point. Ye maun e'en keep wi' your eyes open and your mouth shut at the first.'

'Kirstie, Kirstie,' replied Erskine, with solemnity, 'dinnae ye be speering at a puir bit body who niver harmed ye, and means to give satisfaction to the gentry if he can. And dinna ye be troubling yo'r heid hoo the keeper is conducting himself' ouside, when it's inside that the trouble is like to arise wi' you neglecting

your duties to come and gossip at the doorway. Gae back to Jeannie Morison and Annie Gruar, for they're feckless lasses, left to themselves.'

Kirstie retired in fits of laughter, too well aware of the preparedness of the home department to be needlessly alarmed, and with a parting shot of 'Aweel, they're better than you and your twa slobbering doggies. They can keep a ceevil tongue in their heads whatever,'—disappeared again into her kitchen.

Erskine resumed his easy attitude on the wall, for the day was sultry, and he had been working a brace of young dogs all the forenoon, who had rushed barking at Kirstie, but now lay panting quietly in the shade beside him.

His body was on the wall, but his eye was on the turn of the road, where the 'machine,' or waggonette, would first come into sight. And while noting the drowsy hum of bees among the purple heather on the moorland, and the wild, yet melodious cry of a golden plover from the big hill behind the lodge, his ear was unconsciously adjusted to catch the first faint rumble of far-away wheels.

He fell into a comfortable day-dream, in which he began taking mental photographs of the party about to bear down upon him. Mr. Roberts, 'the Glasgie body,' would of course be red-faced, vulgar, and protuberant of waistband. Mrs. Roberts would naturally, both in manner and appearance, be well mated with the fortunately unconscious 'wholesaler'—fat, homely, and comfortable; while the daughter, by one of those lucky accidents that do occur, was to be an angel! The sons would be ordinary uninteresting youths, without an idea amongst them—

And here he jumped up from day-dreams and unconscious pessimism to his feet, and to the responsibility of his position, for at the turn of the road he caught sight of the waggonette toiling up the hill. He hastily made his way up to the front door, and there, with unmoved countenance, but with cold tremors running down his spinal cord, he drew himself up to await the arrival. He was speedily reinforced by the ghillie Peter Ramsay, who kept looking at him with silent and respectful amusement, while two or three other nondescript individuals appeared as if by magic at different coigns of vantage to enjoy to the full the unwonted visit of a carriage and pair to Glen Brayne.

As he stood there in a light homespun suit, with heather-purple stockings and neat shoes, Erskine was a picture of health and activity, while his face was already so tanned and weather-

beaten with a week spent on the hills in all weathers, that a man not in the secret might readily overlook the real refinement and delicacy that appeared in the forester's face.

The lessee of the shootings at any rate was thoroughly misled, and as the carriage drew up with a feeble effort at a flourish from the driver, he called out, 'Hullo, my man! are you Erskine that Mr. Tomline wrote about? Well, look alive and get our things out, for we have had a hot and tiring journey, and the ladies want to get in and have some tea.'

Walter touched his cap, somewhat awkwardly it must be owned, to the speaker, and came smilingly forward. 'Yes, sir, I'm Erskine, at your service, and it's glad we are to see you all in Glen Brayne. It is hot—*'juvat ire sub umb—'* —he was beginning, but stopped dead, conscious he had begun well by a dreadful slip. However, no one seemed to have quite caught the words, and, trusting they all thought it was some Gaelic welcome, he went on glibly again: 'Dinnot ye fash yoursels' wi' the things at a'. Just come right in. Peter and I will see to your belongings and settle wi' the driver o' the machine.'

As he gallantly gave the ladies his arm down from the carriage he saw at once his mental photographs had been but poor likenesses. Mr. Roberts, if he had saluted his keeper somewhat *de haut en bas*, was obviously a gentleman, and with his grey moustache and commanding presence looked more like a retired Crimean officer than the successful vendor of 'Roberts's Patent.'

Motherly and prepossessing, Mrs. Roberts looked down upon the stylish keeper with good-humoured appreciation of his politeness. As he turned much pleased from her to her daughter, his first thought was—well, here is a disappointment at any rate. But as he looked up again to her face, the half-formed thought died away, and he knew his judgment had been too hasty. If he fancied there were no attractions in Hester Roberts's face he was very far out indeed.

Without any perfect features save her great grey eyes ('shadow eyes' the painters love to call the colour), a winning glamour and vivacity lit up her whole face, especially when she spoke. And the absence of a delicate and very pretty colour from her cheeks was only temporary, caused by a night's uneasy travelling in the Limited Mail. And the grey eyes were most lustrous, limpid orbs, with a large-hearted, kindly, and untroubled gaze. Evidently a heart-whole maiden this, probably superior to

the weakness of falling in love, perhaps thinking matrimony one of the evils incident to advancing age.

In her elder brother Walter at once recognised a Magdalen man whom he remembered to have met in Daunt's rooms, but he soon saw no corresponding recognition need be apprehended. Two fresh-looking schoolboys completed the family.

Erskine had to await further orders in the passage, which he did in rather an agitated condition, alternating between the gun-room table and the gun-room door for half an hour before Mr. Roberts condescended to come forth and interview his keeper. On the former saying he had never seen a stag in his life, Walter, who was as keen as mustard, suggested an immediate commencement the very next morning. 'It'll gie ye a bit of a walk before the 12th. If we see something worth a bullet near home, we'll try him, and if not, we'll just walk cannily hame again. I see ye have twa bonnie lads wi' your party. If they care to come wi' me to the river noo for an hour, I hae a rod wi' the tackle all ready.'

The two 'bonnie lads,' Harry and Jimmy, were promptly fetched, and were delighted at so early a chance of learning the gentle art. Walter completely won their hearts by his patient and kindly exposition concerning the throwing of a fly and the neat management of a worm. And when Hester and her father came down to the river at seven o'clock, they found the trio wet and dirty indeed, but flushed with success and some two dozen small trout. Hester certainly glanced with curiosity at the well-dressed keeper on the bank, and noticed, too, that her small brothers, evidently paying unconscious deference to his manners rather than to his scientific angling, were addressing their attendant as 'Mr.' Erskine.

'They'll do finely wi' practice,' said Walter to the girl, during a pause in the proceedings, when he was no longer required to impale an unhappy worm, or wade in to extricate a bush-hung fly, 'and wi' the water not eighty yards awa' they're sure to get that.'

'Well, they have a kind and excellent instructor, at any rate. I am rather amused, though, to see a man giving such patience to compass the death of such tinies as these.'

'Aweel, my leddy, I'm fond of all kinds of sport. And ye won't think so badly of these small trouties, if Kirstie fries them for your breakfast. There's nae ither sport with which I'm acquent that can tak you so completely out o' yersel as fishing.'

But look at the sun setting yonder, that's a grand colour in the sky the nicht.'

One of the last crimson rays of the dying sunlight fell on Hester Roberts as she stood beside him on the bank, and lit up her lustrous brown hair with dots of gold. His eyes began to watch her face rather than the western sky.

'Pray what do you do in the long winters here?' she continued, after a pause, finding him interesting and easy to talk to, while perfectly respectful and able to keep his distance. 'I have always wondered how the Highlanders pass the long, dreary evenings, and I am afraid I always think of Arctic regions, Esquimaux huts, and Polar bears, which, perhaps, is hardly a fair presentment of the facts.'

'Hech! and indeed no, Miss Roberts. There is always plenty for the keepers and shepherds to do in the winter. The deer are for straying into the lowlands, and the sheep gie plenty of trouble wi' snawdrifts and the like. If we're not oot of doors we can amuse oursels' wi' the books. I find the reading grand.'

'And what do you read?' Her interest in this remarkable forester was beginning to make her drop all tones of superiority and patronage. He, for his part, was not averse to continuing the conversation.

'Aweel, I'm no particular: I tak what I can get. Mebbe I'll read Thomas Carlyle—I mak no doot ye have heard of him—or John Stuart Mill, though he is a dry and laborious mon to my thinking. Awhiles I tak a turn at one of your London novels, if lying handy; and I maun confess that, thanks to a schoolmaster who has come abroad into this glen, I have e'en dippit into the classics themsels'.'

'Good gracious!' murmured the fair lady, now thoroughly bewildered, and small blame to her. 'Yet with this turn for literature you are content to spend your days in rough, hard work on the hills?'

'And why not, Miss Roberts? There's just a time for a' things, as your next neighbour in Strathaven over there says. Mr. Skene is sairly given to the profane use o' the bagpipes on week days, yet there's no mon in a' great Scotland who loves better to bawl the Psawms in kirk on the Sabbath. And in my own case, ye ken it's not as if I spent all my days in this place (an almost imperceptible wink quivered in one eyelid and disappeared), like auld Donald Carnegie, the shepherd. Puir auld bo'y! if it wasn't for the whisky in those same lang evenings

of which ye spake, he wadna ken what to do wi' himsel'. But there, that's just the way he taks his divairson, and I doot not he thinks me as big a fool for peeping into books as I think him for drinking spirits. But if it wasna for divairsony o' tastes and opeenions, this world would be but a solemn place.'

' Well, I see you are a philosopher, though I don't see yet how you have managed it. You have, at any rate, given me some new ideas on the subject of the dwellers in a Highland glen. *They* may be cultivated, even if the country is not! . . . Ah, there is the bell; good-night to you. I hope you'll enable my father to kill a stag to-morrow.' And with a rustle of dainty draperies she was gone.

Erskine raised his cap to her, and stood lingering a few seconds after the graceful damsels had bidden him good-night and gone back to the lodge with her brothers. In the flood of evening light that had given full effect to her grace of form and stateliness, she had looked really beautiful, and, animated by surprise, those lustrous eyes had gleamed again.

The young man, thus deserted, gave a shiver, and instinctively buttoned up his coat. The warmth and loveliness of that summer evening seemed all to have gone with the beauty's departure, and with the swift, unconscious recollection that there are such things as frosty nights in August which can nip and blacken the potato-'shaws' in the fields by the river, he, too, turned on his heel and started on the way homewards. He felt rather lonely and dissatisfied now, and once or twice, as he crossed the moor towards the Blacks' farm, he glanced back at the lights, now beginning to twinkle cheerfully in the lodge windows, half-wishing he was about to spend a pleasant evening with its kindly inmates, half-resenting the fact that they had not detected his birth and breeding on the spot.

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### CHAPTER III.

'WHAT SHALL HE HAVE THAT KILLED THE DEER?'

A FEW hours later Mr. Roberts was being led cautiously down a rocky hill-face by Walter, who had spied a herd of nine stags feeding quietly in an exposed glen, known as Corrie-beagh. The innocent joy of the 'wholesaler' in at last catching them in the field of the telescope was a thing to remember, and the radiant

smile with which the words 'Hey, lad, why, bless my soul ! I 've got them now !' were uttered, amply repaid the stalker for the twenty minutes fruitlessly expended in endeavouring to adjust the glass for the awkward novice. 'But how on earth you can go on patiently angling for trout no bigger than sticklebacks when once you have stalked these fine beasts, I cannot imagine.'

'Aweel, sir, I like dearly to see a heavy stag tumbled up, there's no denying. And we'll be after them at once before they move out of that corrie. We go round the back of that big hill beyond Corrie-beagh till we are above the deer, and then we can come in upon them finely down a burn course that is there. If they do not shift in the next two hours, I can put you within one hundred yards of the biggest deer.'

And off they went. Erskine took his party along at an easy pace, for he knew better than bring a man up to deer in an exhausted condition. And now this morning he had pleasant reflections to fill up the time. When Hester had come out to see her father start, she had greeted the young man with an inquiring glance and a furtive smile, and a dainty nod of her shapely head that had been uncommonly like a bow. He fully recognised in her quizzical looks the outward and visible sign of inward doubt and half-embarrassment. Shy questioning glances may seem but slight refreshment for three hours of uninterrupted climbing, but all through the morning Erskine's thoughts lingered on the meaning of that unconscious smile, and any remarks made by Mr. Roberts had the effect of bringing him out of a pleasant day dream.

But he made no mistakes, and his keen, practised eyes were turned vigilantly upon an outer world. As they crept cautiously over the skyline down into Corrie-beagh, he saw at once the deer were not where they had last glassed them, and, raising his head, he soon detected them moving off at a rapid trot below them, as if recently startled by some unwonted apparition in the forest.

'What's up noo, I wonder. Just look at the deer gaeing helter-skelter over that green moss. We've had nought to do wi' the moving of them, that's certain. Keep down a bittie till we see what they'll tak into their heads next. They're a couple of miles frae Strathaven yet, but they shouldn't be so unsettled like in August.'

Even as he was speaking, he had the glass out to see what cause for alarm there might be in the glen, but for a while made out nothing. In a few minutes, however, an indignant and

expressive grunt broke the silence, and showed there was some new feature in the landscape.

‘I hae gotten a glimpse noo of a laddie coming beyond that clump of birch-trees in the burn that should know better than spoil our sport in this way. But though I canna mak him oot richtly for the distance, I’m thinking it’s just a puir daft body, one Robbie Maclagan—half-witted belike you wad ca’ him in England. He is sort of privileged here, and goes plucking blaeberrys and such like for the gentry. But for a’ that he knaws weel enough he isna wanted up here on the forest the day. Though he’s fully twa miles doun, I shall have to go and stop him there, for he’s heading straight after the deer.’

And divesting himself of his glass, which he left with Mr. Roberts, Erskine made off at full speed down hill for the unconscious Robbie. He could not resist hiding behind a rowan-tree as he came within hail, but Rob’s terror on hearing mysterious squeals and groans proceeding from the bushes was so abject that Walter instantly relieved his mind by stepping forth, and turned him back in kindly fashion enough. ‘But, Robbie, my lad, just you be content to bide in the low ground. There’s blaeberrys eneugh for ye there without wandering into the deer corries.’

He was back with the sportsman in a drenched condition. ‘Ah, Mr. Roberts, ye have had the best of it on this hot day, sitting here cool and comfortable on the tops, while I’ve been climbing back from puir Robbie yonder. But he’ll not trouble us further, and ye’ve no need to tell me where the deer are gone to, for I caught sight of them as I came in over the skyline. Yon eight-pointer at the head of them all, just below a grey stone there, is the beast you shall fire at. If he’ll stay where he is now we shall get at him nicely.’

The rifle was loaded with due solemnity, and replaced loosely in its case; and as Walter knew his bearings too well on that part of the ground to be confused and tentative in his method of approach, he was soon leading the excited Mr. Roberts craftily down the slope right on to the deer. It was an easy approach, and nothing but the tips of the eight-pointer’s horns, who lay highest and nearest, were visible. With these cheering landmarks, Walter led on confidently, though slowly, in deference to his follower.

‘This is too exciting for anything,’ murmured the half-frenzied sportsman, when they stopped at last, safe behind a granite boulder, only eighty yards away from that pair of horns.

‘Deed, ay, sir—“a joy that is almost pain,”’ muttered the sympathetic keeper, whose quotation passed unnoticed in the extreme emotion of those last few moments. ‘It’s an alarming thing is one’s first stalk. But keep your courage up, and aim low when he does rise. One’s awful apt to shoot over the brutes.’

As he finished speaking the tips of the horns rose upwards, for the big stag regained his feet, and for the first time was in full view, broadside on.

‘Tak him noo,’ murmured Erskine, and Mr. Roberts obediently gripped the rifle. The stag deserves a medal for his steadiness under fire.

There is an awful moment for Erskine, as he feels rather than sees the sportsman’s finger is tightening on the trigger. Is he remembering the injunction to aim low, or is he taking a comprehensive shot, regardless of the rifle-sights? As the roar of the ‘Express’ rings out on the startled air, the big stag rears violently upwards, but it is plain he is suffering from nervous derangement, not from a death-wound. He shakes his antlered head and turns downhill, and before the agitated Erskine can well ejaculate, ‘You’re over him. Let fly at him again, or he’ll be out o’ sight,’ the second trigger falls, like a snapshot at a woodcock.

But though the sulphurous smoke pours backward into the sportsman’s baffled eyes, and for the moment blinds him, the wild yell of triumph that comes from his attendant marks the keen appreciation with which the stalker has seen the first stag of the season roll over and die. For Mr. Roberts had indeed ‘fluked’ most successfully. Just as the stag was passing out of the view, the second bullet flying high had dropped in the neck and rolled the heavy deer over and over like a rabbit. And there they found him stone dead in the purple heather, as they hurriedly made their way down. But it was luck rather than skill and pre-meditation to which that stag fell a victim.

Erskine was far too crafty to detract from so successful a performance. ‘Deed and ye did it fine that time. Seeing you had no time to spare, you couldna have takeu your beast in a better place.’

And Mr. Roberts, still pleasantly confused by the agitation of the stalk and its hurried *finale*, laid the flattering unction to his soul, and, while Erskine drew out his knife, he was already meditating the words in which he would narrate his own coolness and judgment to a sympathetic and admiring audience at home.

‘All’s well that ends well,’ he called out to the keeper, who was now engaged in trying to attract the attention of Peter and the pony in the low ground by waving handkerchiefs and blowing a dog-whistle. ‘But are you often disturbed by trespassers in the forest, as we were this morning?’

‘Aweel, sir, not often, but I have known it before. It’s generally tourists. If they do it wi’out acquainting the stalker, they ought to be ashamed o’ themselves, for we should not be for giving them a harsh answer, if they would only tak the lead from us and wait on our movements. But they think we’re apt to be down on them, you see, and nothing will please them but what they’ll be off at daybreak all over the hill before the sportsmen come out, thinking, foolish bodies, that we’ll never detect it. No, they never think of the deer running aboot, the tourists don’t, and they know little o’ the power o’ our glasses.’

With some indignant grunts, inaudible anathemas, probably against ‘tourist bodies’ in general, Erskine now proceeded, amid the usual strong language as the pony backs and plunges, to get the dead stag on to the pony’s back, and prepare for the homeward turn.

‘Peter, lad,’ said he on the way, ‘the Prince o’ Wales at Abergeldie and my Lord Fife at Mar Lodge are much given to having a torchlight dance when the deer have been killed. I’m thinking I’m not above taking so good a lesson from my betters in Aberdeenshire. So we’ll e’en get the lasses out of the Lodge at night, when we’ve strung up the eight-pointer, and we’ll dance “foursome” reels around him. You’ve got a dry pine faggot or two in the venison larder to light up with, and you’ll just bring your pipes with you. That carpenter chap Donald has a neat step.’

So the ball-room festivities were soon planned out.

As they came down to the lodge, Walter proudly led the pony with the deer strapped on its back to the front door, and Peter, whose bagpipes seemed to be uncommonly handy, conveyed to the awe-struck hearers indoors the first intimation of the triumphal return by striking up ‘There’s nae luck aboot the hoose,’ which seemed hardly appropriate, but was the one air which he was surest of.

The ladies rushed to the door. Mr. Roberts, flushed with success and the warm weather, received a domestic ovation with most beaming smiles, yet with a fine air of manly indifference, as who should say—

It is not often that I do these things,  
But when I do, I do them handsomely.

The details will be kept to have their due effect over the after-dinner claret.

The prospect of a torchlight dance was hailed with acclaim, and gathering darkness found the Lowland party all assembled in the airy wooden shed which did duty as a venison larder. The big stag was now suspended from the topmost rafters ; still beautiful in death, and shapely in his red-brown coat, he added the appropriate sporting touch to the character of the revels. Two or three pine knots had already been lit, and threw a weird and fitful glare into the corners of the impromptu ballroom, while Peter was again essaying his skill on the pipes by 'something that faintly resembled an air' in the shape of a reel.

Erskine, as master of the ceremonies, escorted the ladies with much outward solemnity and ill-concealed amusement to a bench at one end, and, seeing that the fair Hester was little likely to join the dance without encouragement, he at once started off with the two comely lasses from the kitchen and 'the carpenter chap.'

Whence once the wild unearthly skreel from the bagpipes was in full blast, Walter danced like one inspired. The flicker of his rapid feet was as lightsome as if he had never been on the hill that day, and the full rude revelry of the national dance found in him a fine exponent. Those rustic maidens, too, Jeannie Morison and Annie Gruar, proud to be dancing with so aristocratic a cavalier, and anxious to show off before the gentry, were in no way behindhand or lagging in their movements ; while the adroit coolness with which Donald, the carpenter, took his steps was a sight to see. The winner of many prizes at local 'gatherings,' he exhibited a professional command of the movements, and his finished, quiet style was an admirable foil to the vivacious and impassioned *abandon* of the now exalted stalker.

Hester looked on, pleased with the rapidly moving merry figures lighted up by the flaring torches under the black rafters, and caught something of the wild spirit that animated the performers. And when the last melancholy cadence of the pipes died away in a long-drawn-out expiring groan, and Walter came gracefully up, and, with real deference, begged her to dance the next reel with them, she hesitated no longer, but took her place with the others. Peter renewed his efforts, the dancers seemed to redouble theirs, and Hester soon found herself not far behind the rest in full enjoyment of the lively measure.

'There noo, Miss Roberts,' as he handed her back flushed and smiling, 'there's nothing like reel dancing after all, especially when one has so fair a partner.'

Hester was quite young enough to be mischievous, and this speech from the keeper was a little too much. 'Ah,' she said, as if absently, 'do you like it better than a good waltz, for instance?'

But Walter, off his guard and tripping before, now recovered himself for the present. 'It's but little waltzing that a poor stalker lad like me can ever get, Miss Roberts. But I dearly love a reel, now and again. Donald shall show us a Highland fling noo. He is a pretty dancer, and nervousness is no weakness of his.'

Donald was only too proud to exhibit his powers in a *pas seul* and with that the dancing ended, for it was growing late, and next day was the 'Twelfth.'

But Hester, foiled as she had been in her mischievous desire to throw the handsome keeper off his guard, could not help recurring to the sentiment, 'especially with so fair a partner.'

Did Highland stalkers all talk like this to the rustic Amaryllis, and were Jeannie Morison and Annie Gruar the happy recipients of such high-flown compliments from the Glen Brayne Corydons?

Truly a remarkable and not altogether unpleasing young man, with a curious look of refinement for one of the horny-handed sons of toil.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### A HIGHLAND SABBATH.

THE days passed swiftly onwards to the end of the week. The Sunday morning broke in cloudless splendour, and the nearer air flickered and trembled with the intense heat. Not a breath was stirring. It was a day when the leap of a trout in the Glen Brayne pools, or the uneasy cry of a disturbed curlew, startled, the hearer, for all around was so still. Poor Charlie, the stalker, more profane of yore than now when his leg was broken, had given it as an axiom: 'If there is one fine day in the week, it's just the Sawbath that will snap it up.'

But despite the heat the usual gathering was at the kirk for the noonday service, their numbers reinforced by the shooting tenants within reach. The Roberts faction came up in a neat

waggonette just as the Strathaven laird, Mr. Skene, drove to the gateway in his less fashionably built dog-cart.

Erskine's faithful collie followed him into kirk, as one well accustomed, and lay down under the pew. Poor Hamish, he was always a religious dog, and in England the first to move at the call to evening prayers! What thoughts passed through the old dog's brain on such occasions it is beyond our present purpose to inquire. But as the highest religious effort of which the Red Indian is said to be capable is to sit on a fine evening at the entrance of his wigwam, smoking the well-coloured every-day calumet in peace, lost in day-dreams the while of the happy hunting-grounds that shall greet him after death, so perhaps we may indulge in the conceit that the collie's creed partakes of theirs. Very quiet he lies, with his moist black nose athwart his paws, and his brown eyes closed, but his thoughts, maybe, are far away among the rabbit burrows on the moorland, whither his youthful fancy earliest learnt to stray.

The Scottish form of worship, though a novelty to some of its hearers, had lost this attraction for the stalker, and his thoughts played sad vagaries through the service. Small heed did he pay to the kindling voice, impressive presence, and orthodox monition of the worthy MacBride, for in front of him, looking prettier than ever, sat the fair girl who had already put into his head new and pleasant dreams, sweet thoughts of a dim possibility as yet blushingly inchoate. He followed her every movement, every quiver of her bonnet, and for him the sermon was as though it had never been.

But afterwards, outside the kirk, he was more in his element. Pleasant nods, respectful bows, and cordial handshakings with the small lairds and sheep-farmers, was the order of the day. Nor had the very pretty daughter of Peter the ghillie any reason to complain of want of warmth in his welcome.

Mr. Skene, who had followed the elaborate phraseology and tedious inference of Mr. MacBride with rapt attention, gripped Walter by both hands: 'Young man, I'm glad to see ye back amongst us, though you are bewildering us by playing the keeper and such-like games. We could have done with your sister Patience in the Glen once more, but it's the way o' this world that ye canna do the things that ye would. Which brings me to the preaching—eh, mon, it was grand.'

'Did ye obsairve the awfu' cautious spirit in which the meenister handled his deductions? I misdoot me sairly of his

premisses—I hae a word to crack wi' him aboot them, but I will say this for the mon: if ye need a body to tackle a metaphysical subject wi' the subtlety of the serpent for the space of two hours, gaining here a little, and there a little, till he arrives at one grand generalisation, ye maun e'en tak MacBride, else ye'll likely gang further and fare worse.'

'Oo ay, he's a grand mon, MacBride,' began Walter diplomatically, somewhat confused by the thought that he had not heeded one word either of premisses or conclusion, and constrained, too, to make a fair show in the Scotch by reason of the approaching footsteps of the Roberts party. 'It is in the abstract, in the domains of pure reason, ye ken, that MacBride is so far above ither theologians. For if his discourse be aboot the practical, I'm thinking he doesna ken varra weel from pairsonal obsairvation what he is talking aboot, for he is sair given to the reading of books, and not owermuch to the reading of men. But come (feeling he would soon desperately commit himself at this rate), Mr. Skene, let me mak you acquent wi' your neighbours from Glen Brayne Lodge. My lady, this is Mr. Skene here of Strathaven.'

Whereupon Mr. Skene, who eyed Southrons in general with mistrust, but was never above smiling upon a young and graceful girl, raised his cap with great complacency, to which she replied with the most becoming inclination of her Sunday bonnet. And though Walter longed desperately to talk to her too, and cut out Skene, who began discoursing at once sagely about the weather and the crops, he feared floundering in fresh theological quagmires, and, glad of this intellectual reprieve, made his escape bodily, leaving the others to develop their acquaintance.

'That's a smart young fellow,' said the Lowlander, 'he is as keen at a troutting or rabbitting expedition with the boys as at circumventing a herd of deer.'

'Yes,' added Hester, 'he really is kind to my small brothers. They are quite devoted to him. He is very shrewd and well read too. Do you know anything of his former history?'

'Aweel,' began the laird, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, for he was in the secret, 'he does fancy himself a bit above the other stalkers and shepherds in the glen. And Mr. Tomline thinks a deal of him for some reason or other. But maybe I'm saying owermuch aboot him, for, as you say, he's never above his work. I've seen him fighting on wi' a frightened deer pony when other men would just have given it up and left the stag lying out

on the moor all night. But when once he gets his blood up and means business, Walter Erskine is not the man to give in. And now you ask me about his parentage and a' that. I canna rightly tell ye. Ye maun e'en inquire it of himsel. But I'm thinking—(here a more pronounced smile came over the laird's face)—if one could get at the rights of it, he isna just exactly what he pretends to be. But there, it's none of my business, that I can see, and if he will na tell ye, there's none other that can. So good-day to you, and good sport in Glen Brayne.'

And so the worthy Scotchman passed on down the road, still dwelling with inward pleasure on some of the drier portions of doctrine recently enunciated by the eloquent and profound MacBride. But as the Roberts' party turned off and made across the stone bridge to their own side of the river Brayne, Hester broke in upon her father's own reverie with, 'You may rely upon it, your stalker is a gentleman.'

Vexed that his daughter should have put into forcible and unambiguous words what he personally did not like to be too positive about, he answered with parental dignity,—

'My dear, don't be absurd. Erskine may be pretty well educated, I don't say he isn't; but that doesn't make him a gentleman, in your sense of the word. I don't like these hasty remarks: at your age you ought to be more careful in your impressions. And you will find, Hester, as you grow older, and consequently wiser, that appearances are deceitful.'

'There, my dear father,' said the naughty girl, 'I go with you entirely. Appearances *are* deceitful in this very case. I am quite sure that what he pretends to be, and what he is, are two entirely different personages.'

'I could wish, though, that you wouldn't say rash things like that. We have nothing whatever to go upon. Mr. Tomline wrote of him as an ordinary keeper, not a prince in disguise. Let us cease from fairy tales and keep to common sense.'

'Well, never mind. I don't want to vex you, but wait and see. Of course, I don't expect a man to notice small details either, but his shooting suits are wondrously well made. They are so like George's, that they might have come from Standen's too. Perhaps some day he will hang his coat up on the pegs in the passage out of the gun-room, and then I shall get a chance of inspecting the lining.'

'Good gracious, Hester!' said her prim, well-conducted father, now seriously alarmed; 'let me beg of you to do nothing of the

kind. It is bad enough to be uttering such ridiculous ideas, without adding to them injudicious conduct.'

'Never you mind, Hester,' put in the schoolboy Jimmy, patronisingly. 'Mr. Erskine is a brick. You should see him work for us out ferreting. He thinks nothing of digging a tunnel a hundred yards long to get at a ferret that don't want to come out.'

'Jimmy's no better than Hester,' said George, the Oxonian son. 'He always calls the keeper "Mr." Erskine, as if his gentility was too overpowering for his youthful mind. For my part, I find him too reserved and stand-off, which in a man of his position is hardly called for. But I allow he is quite ready to work like a slave.'

While he was being thus freely discussed, Walter had betaken himself, rather lonely and dissatisfied, to the moorland. He had meant to walk down to the Tomlines for the Sunday, but now that the day had come it suggested sunstroke rather than invited pedestrianism. It would be a twenty-mile walk, and for once he was honestly tired.

He had altogether forgotten in taking up his present duties that, while the shooting-party might divide their forces, going out in turn, there was but one keeper to accompany them all.

So there had been scant respite. Perhaps the hardest experience of all had been on what Mr. Roberts complacently termed 'an off-day,' endeavouring to 'give satisfaction' out ferreting to that pair of bloodthirsty schoolboys. They had evinced such ingenuous and outspoken dismay whenever a ferret stuck in the hole and refused to achieve the object of its existence by bolting rabbits, that a deep pity had seized him and compelled him to seize a spade and dig under a burning sun like one possessed, till the recusant animal had been unearthed and torn rudely from its cool shelter. But he did wish that day that he had been a ferret, and not a ferret's master.

On the other hand, there had undeniably been 'moments.' He had seen and admired Hester Roberts once or twice every day, had seen, too, that he had succeeded in arousing her interest in him. For though his eye had rested on her only for a week, and though in that extended period he had but once been favoured with anything like a sustained conversation, yet now this warm-hearted and impulsive young man, who only three weeks ago had felt the world for him henceforth was irretrievably hollow, was already indulging in rosy-coloured dreams about this charming

and loveable maid, and flattering himself that it was a good honest old-fashioned case of love at first sight. Little did he think nowadays of Miss Dorothy Townshend and her favourite ballad on summer evenings :—

How could you leave me,  
How e'er deceive me,  
How could you use a poor maiden so?

True, she had sung it with pretty blushes and shy meaning glances, but with a face quite unclouded with despair. Perhaps he was not much to blame. And now it was Hester, Hester, and nothing but Hester for him. He hoped she wouldn't be angry when the deception was no longer kept up. He could very well picture to himself those grand grey eyes flashing out indignant and scornful gleams, though so far he had only seen a winsome and mischievous smile in them. But surely if it were once pointed out to her that but for this same innocent deception they would never have met, she would forgive and let those limpid orbs rest pleasantly on him again.

And as he lay there full-length in the fragrant heather, under the shadow of a rowan and two or three miniature birch-trees, through whose light foliage the wind blew cool, the sound of the 'Wedding March,' played by some fairy band, was in his ears.

E. LENNOX PEEL.

(*To be continued.*)

## At the Sign of the Ship.

IN an age so vexed by the problem of poverty, and so expert in the Historic Method, it seems strange that no one writes a History of Property, and examines the remedies proposed or attempted in the past. Plenty of schemes for dividing the wealth of the rich among the poor, plenty of theories of 'ransom,' of 'expropriation,' and the like, are now discussed in England, France, and Germany. But few persons appear to remember that of Aristotle: 'in the remote ages gone by, it is probable that all these expedients have been tried, not once, but many times.' In the experience of the race the question of Property and Poverty has constantly recurred, of course under constantly varying social conditions. What remedies have been sought out by human ingenuity? Why, nearly all conceivable remedies, including three acres, with or without a cow. *Ges anadasmos*, the repartition of landed property, was a favourite party cry in ancient Greece, and we all know how those advanced Liberals, the Gracchi, fared and failed in Rome. If it were true that

old experience might attain  
To something like prophetic strain,

the 'old experience' of Aristotle should be 'something like.' Probably the Greek of many Members of Parliament, and of Comrades Quelch and Hyndman, is a little rusty; but they might, out of mere curiosity, see what the ancient anti-communist had to say for himself, and against Comrade Plato, in the Master of Balliol's version of the *Politics*. As for Communism, the Master (Aristotle, not Mr. Jowett) says frankly that it is opposed to human nature; in fact, 'impossible, and not to be done.' 'The remedy for such evils is not so much to equalise property as to train the nobler natures not to desire more, and' (which is more feasible) 'to prevent the lower from getting it.' Aristotle perceived, with very great clearness, that any attempt to deal with property must be backed by legislation about population. Now it is obvious to every student of the subject, that the classes which most desire to limit property are most active, where population is concerned, in unlimited addition. Even to

them, therefore, it will be plain that drastic legislation on this subject is 'contrary to human nature,' in a double sense. But argument on this topic is of little avail.

To Comrade Karl Marx, and Comrade Champion, and all the Comrades, one may say what Aristotle said to Comrade Plato, 'Such legislation' (for equality in property) 'may have a specious appearance of benevolence; men readily listen to it, and are easily induced to believe that in some wonderful manner everybody will become everybody's friend, especially when someone' (Comrade Plato, I fear) 'is heard denouncing the evils now existing in States . . . which are said to arise out of the possession of private property. These evils, however, are due to a very different cause—the wickedness of human nature.' Or, let us say, to Human Nature without the wickedness. Nor can the ideal Republic, the industrial New Jerusalem of one of the characters in Mr. Besant's 'Children of Gibeon,' come down from heaven like a bride, till Human Nature is altered. To be sure the starving Fuegians are all equally badly off, and if one man gets a blanket the tribe divides it into equal rags on the spot, and on First Principles. But then that communistic condition is not ideally delightful, and implies equality of starvation. To such a state, however, a system of equal and common property would necessarily reduce the boasted Aryan race, and thus our descendants would struggle out of it into civilisation again, and so on, *da capo*. But probably Human Nature will be too strong for this return to Fuegian economics. 'How immeasurably greater,' says Aristotle, 'is the pleasure when a man feels a thing to be his own, for the love of Self is a feeling implanted by Nature, and not given in vain.'

\* \* \*

Yet Aristotle, as the Master of Balliol shows, is not the mere brutal economic Philistine, who bluffly remarks that equality is impossible, and that all experiments in that direction must be put down by force. He 'deigns to think about the miserable earnings of the poor; he sympathises with them in their indignation at the extortions which are practised on them; he is aware how much harm may be done them by indiscriminate charity . . . he would give them, not doles, but the means of stocking a shop or purchasing a small farm.' As usual, in that most perplexing book the *Politics* of Aristotle, these benevolent maxims are *not* to be found under the reference given by the translator. But

most of them will be discovered in the translation itself, vol. i. pp. 197, 198. The money to purchase small farms and shops for the poor is to be taken from 'the public revenue'—that is, in England, from the Ratepayer. It is easy to see that the Ratepayer would never stand this for a moment. However, here we trench on Mr. Jesse Collings's Bill, and as that is within the range of practical politics, it seems safe to admire the benevolent but perfectly futile remedies of Aristotle. He commends the happy device of the Carthaginians, of 'sending the poor into their dependent towns, where they grow rich.' Pleasant for the dependent towns! The favourite plan of relieving poverty, in Aristotle's own time, was 'to get property confiscated in the Law Courts, in order to please the people.' An excellent practical plan this; only, when you have confiscated *all* the property, and drunk it, what next? It is manifest that Aristotle was a great deal more clever at criticising the social theories of other people than at inventing reforms of his own which will hold water.

\* \* \*

To the future student of Property and Poverty I venture to recommend a book less familiar than the *Politics* of Aristotle, *The History of the Chichimecs*. The Chichimecs were not, like the Coqcigrues, a merely chimerical race, and their records, by Ixtlilochitl, himself a Chichimec by the mother's side, contain an account of Mexican dealings with Poverty and Property before the invasion of Cortes. As to the Land Question, affairs were managed thus: Each town and each village had its own territories, and out of the best of the soil was measured a large square plot, the exact size of which it is not easy to ascertain. This was called Seignorial land, and all the people of the town cultivated it compulsorily. There were other demesne lands, a kind of manor, the actual property of the head chief. Each quarter of the village or town again had its own allotment, out of the produce of which the inhabitants lived, being attached, as it were, to the soil, and prevented by law from selling their lots. Then the land was, as far as property went, in the hands of the chiefs, much as it was in the hands of the noblesse in Russia, while the population paid a kind of labour rent for the allotments which supported themselves. But in spite of arrangements which left the common people little personal liberty, while securing to them an interest in the land, wars and other troubles ended in famines, and the king, Netzahualcoyotzin, established relief works, building vast palaces

The poor were also permitted by this generous prince to gather wood for fuel in the royal chase. The king was one day wandering with a single attendant, like Haroun Alraschid, when he met a very poor boy, with a few wretched bits of twigs and branches. 'Why don't you go into the forest?' said the king: 'there you will easily gather more dry wood than you can carry.' The child replied that to gather wood in the royal forests was a capital offence—in fact, he might as well have been a crofter on the outskirts of Mr. Winans's deer forests. 'Who is the king?' said Netzahualcoyotzin. 'He is a greedy ruffian,' replied the child, whom the king caused to be brought before him next day, with his parents. He then loaded them with presents, thanked the boy for his engaging frankness, and made a law permitting dry wood to be collected in all the royal hunting grounds. Another day he saw a member of the proletariat point to his palace, and heard him exclaim, 'The man who owns that house has all he wants, while we are dying of hunger.' Next day he sent for the man and his wife, assured them that he was not so happy as they supposed, and gave them presents enough to set them up in business. 'What I give you would suffice for me,' said Netzahualcoyotzin, 'for he who has too much has nothing at all.' The king also haunted the markets and shops of the poor, in disguise, and bought up their surplus stock of perishable goods at double its value. But Mendicancy was a capital offence in the golden days of good Netzahualcoyotzin. It will be observed that this monarch, though he had an excellent heart, was no more successful than Aristotle in devising any practical means of coping with poverty. His experiments seem worth mentioning, as Ixtlilochitl is an author not very widely read by students of economical questions.

\* \* \*

The poor are not the only failures; but it is curious to contrast with their silence the wails of a failure who was 'in comfortable circumstances.' Such a failure was the late M. Amiel, of Geneva, whose 'Diary,' in Mrs. Humphrey Ward's most admirable translation, or in the original Swiss, most people of letters have been reading. M. Amiel did not succeed as a poet, nor, to any dazzling extent, as a critic even. He bewailed and explained himself in many volumes of journal, and the mournful echoes of his regret might have suggested (though it seems they did not) the following verses on failure by a Person of Quality:—

## FAILURE.

And you have failed, O Poet? Sad!  
Yet failures are the commonplace.  
Boast not, as if *you* only had  
Secured a failure in the race.  
We see them thick on every hand  
As blackberries; but you, you say,  
Because your nature was so grand,  
Have failed in a peculiar way.

You weep: 'I had such high desires,  
My soul had yearnings truly great,  
Than broken altars, faded fires,  
I have deserved a better fate.  
And others gain my heart's desire;  
They win the prize I vainly crave,  
And they will set the Thames on fire  
When I am mouldering in my grave.'

What matter, yet? The years of blight  
The fair and laughing seasons bring—  
And if we flee or if we fight,  
It is a very little thing.  
Small anguish have *you* undergone,  
Poor fool, to write, with careful art,  
Your melancholy verses on,  
With some, to fail, would break the heart!

Go, look into a dingy street  
Of Whitechapel, the town's disgrace;  
Mark well the throng; you will not meet  
One happy or one careless face.  
Have *these* not failed, on them the rain  
Strikes, cheerless, from the sky of grey;  
No lurking comfort in their pain  
Of subtle self-esteem have they!

They live their wasted lives, and die,  
Nor much their destiny bewail,  
While you to all the world must cry:  
'Alas, but see how *I* can fail!'

Compassionate my fruitless tears,  
 Peruse the volumes of my woes,  
 The burden of my blighted years,  
 In metre some, and some in prose !'

You fail ? Then take it at the worst—  
 Shall some not gloriously succeed ?  
 Ah ! waive awhile your lot accurst,  
 To triumph in a noble deed.  
 Nay, but you grudge the victory,  
 Nor heed, how the hard fight prevailed,  
 Through Time's exulting harmony  
 You shriek : ' Alas ! but I have failed ! '

M. K.

\* \* \*

Though all my sympathies are with free fishing, especially free trout fishing, in the Border waters, it seems to me as if the anglers of that district were in a fair way to destroy their own sport. The greater part of Tweed, Ettrick, Yarrow, Ail, Teviot, and other streams, have always been open to the public, and an excellent arrangement this has proved in many ways. The tired weaver of the manufacturing towns has always been able, at the cost of a short walk, or a threepenny railway fare, to find himself in the most beautiful scenery, alone with himself, the goddess of Angling, and the trout. But in recent years neither the loneliness nor the trout have made part of the angler's pleasure. In the first place, the towns have grown more populous, and fishing more popular. The Tweed on a Saturday is as crowded with rods as the Thames on a Bank holiday. As a result, the trout dwindle in number, and increase in caution. Furthermore, the local angler has no idea of sparing the small fry. He puts trout no longer than the finger in his basket, and of them makes his breakfast. He scarcely ever captures a fish of a pound weight, and would be horrified by the English rule of returning to the water everything under a pound. Nor is this the worst. Overfishing, river pollution, and the habit of keeping small fry, root out the fish ; but all these are more harmless than the eternal poaching with salmon-roe, nets, and lime.

The fair fisher, on open water in the South of Scotland, can hardly hope ever to have a good day. On the Tweed a very skilled angler, like Mr. Thomas Wright of Selkirk, may still make a good basket, because the volume of water in the Tweed

even in a dry summer, defeats, more or less, the devices of the poaching gang, who ruin the fair sport of their brethren, and who sell their spoils for whisky. Now, there is but one remedy for so many evils, and that is to organise Angling Associations among the working-men themselves, associations with an almost nominal subscription, say half-a-crown a year. This has been tried, in some districts, with the assent of the landowners; but, alas! it is denounced as an interference with the ancient license of free fishing. It is an interference, but without some such precaution the poachers will soon leave no trout at all. They sweep even the remote hill burns, like the famous Douglas Burn. Then the Border angler of scanty means must soon make his choice between a limited protection, in his own interests, or no fishing at all. His liberal instincts make him detest even limited preserving; his love of honest sport should draw him the other way. But, as I read in that excellent journal the *Fishing Gazette*, there is an agitation on the Border against all preserving of trout streams. It is in vain pointed out that the preserved portions (like the three miles of Ettrick which flow near the Duke of Buccleuch's house of Bowhill) are a kind of sanctuary for the almost extinct trout, whence, if over-populated, he may emigrate into the open water. 'Remove these feeders, and throw Tweed and Teviot open from source to mouth, and I am certain that in twenty-five years the fishing would be at an end.' So writes Mr. Tod in the *Fishing Gazette*, and his contention is literally true. Twenty years ago it was easy to catch a noble dish of trout within two miles of most Border towns. Now it is exceedingly difficult to do so, even in waters twenty miles from any town, and the change is mainly produced by unfair fishing with nets and poisons. As to the Tweed Acts, as applying to salmon, that is another question; though, even here, it is plain that unlimited poaching when the fish are spawning would soon make the Tweed as empty of fish as the Lea at Tottenham, or 'The Hackney River,' on which Gilbert wrote in Izaak Walton's time. These remarks are written purely in the interests of popular sport, and of 'the weaver laddie,' who is a good fellow, and uses only the lures legitimate on the Border—fly, worm, minnow, natural fly, and the grub called 'the Scrow,' a hideous creature, attractive to big trout. But what are our big trout to those of New Zealand, running from 5 lb. to 24 lb.? Who would not emigrate?

## APRIL ON TWEED.

As birds are fain to build their nest  
 The first soft sunny day,  
 So longing wakens in my breast  
 A month before the May,  
 When now the wind is from the West,  
 And Winter melts away.

The snow lies yet on Eildon hill,  
 But soft the breezes blow.  
 If melting snows the waters fill  
 We nothing heed the snow,  
 And we must up and take our will,—  
 A fishing will we go !

Below the branches brown and bare,  
 Beneath the primrose lea,  
 The trout lies waiting for his fare,  
 A hungry trout is he ;  
 He 's hooked, and springs and splashes there  
 Like salmon from the sea !

Oh, April tide 's a pleasant tide,  
 However times may fall,  
 And sweet to welcome Spring, the Bride,  
 You hear the mavis call ;  
 But all adown the water-side  
 The Spring 's most fair of all.

*The 'Donna.'*

THE Editor begs to acknowledge the receipt of the following contributions :  
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